Marxism Today

June 1987 95p

Bryan Gould Interview
The Thatcher Years
Gramsci and Britain
Japan At Bay
Civil Servants
Women's Novels
Glastonbury
Pull-Out

Labour's Moment of Truth

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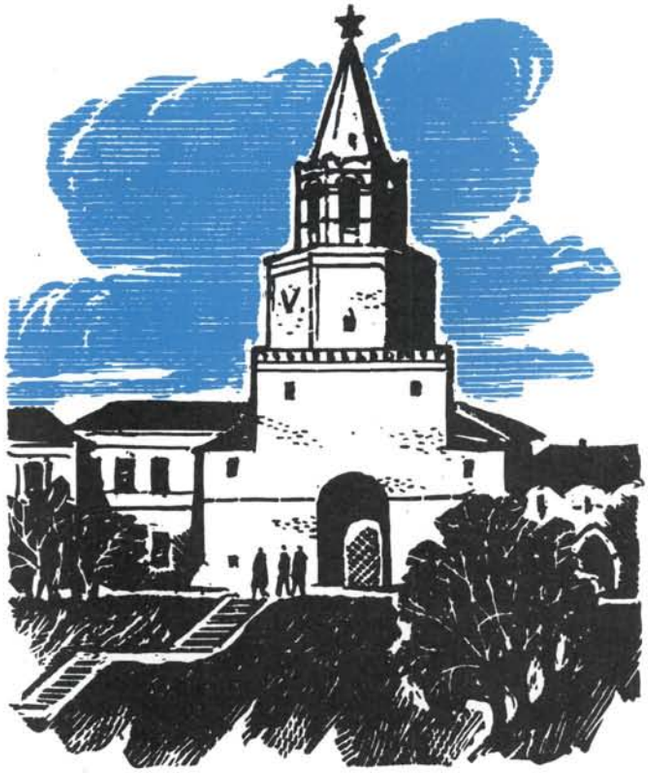

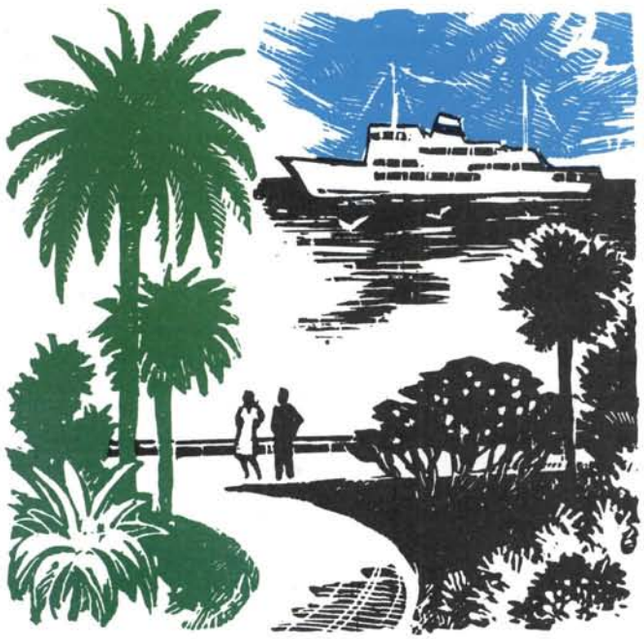

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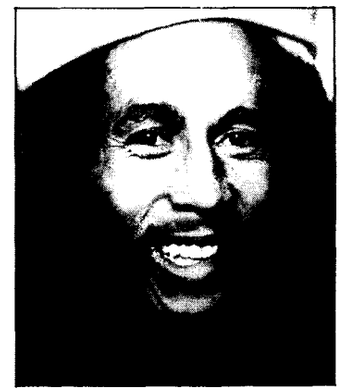

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Sterling Effort?

It certainly looks like a plot. Last October, when the option of an autumn election was still open, Britain's economy was going through one of those twitchy patches through which it periodically seems to pass.

Or at least that was the message being signalled by the financial markets: sterling was plunging, interest rates were being raised to try to stop it, and the *Daily Telegraph* was warning that this rise was too little and too late.

You can list the various weaknesses in the British economy which were being trotted out at the time. Some were immediate ones, related to that bout of sterling weakness. The balance of payments current account had moved into deficit; the oil price, though up from below US$10 a barrel, was still in the low teens; the fall in sterling was expected to push inflation to over 5% this year; and yet interest rates had to remain far above the level of most industrial nations in order to protect the pound.

Naturally this short-term gloom gave credence to the familiar long-seated concerns: the decline in our manufacturing performance; the way in which any rise in demand for labour merely led to a rise in earnings of those in work rather than jobs for the unemployed; the pressure on public finances already caused by the drop in oil revenues and further threatened by the eventual end to the privatisation programme; and, for the few remaining monetarists, the rapid rise in the UK money supply – despite high interest rates – and the time-bomb concealed in here for future inflation.

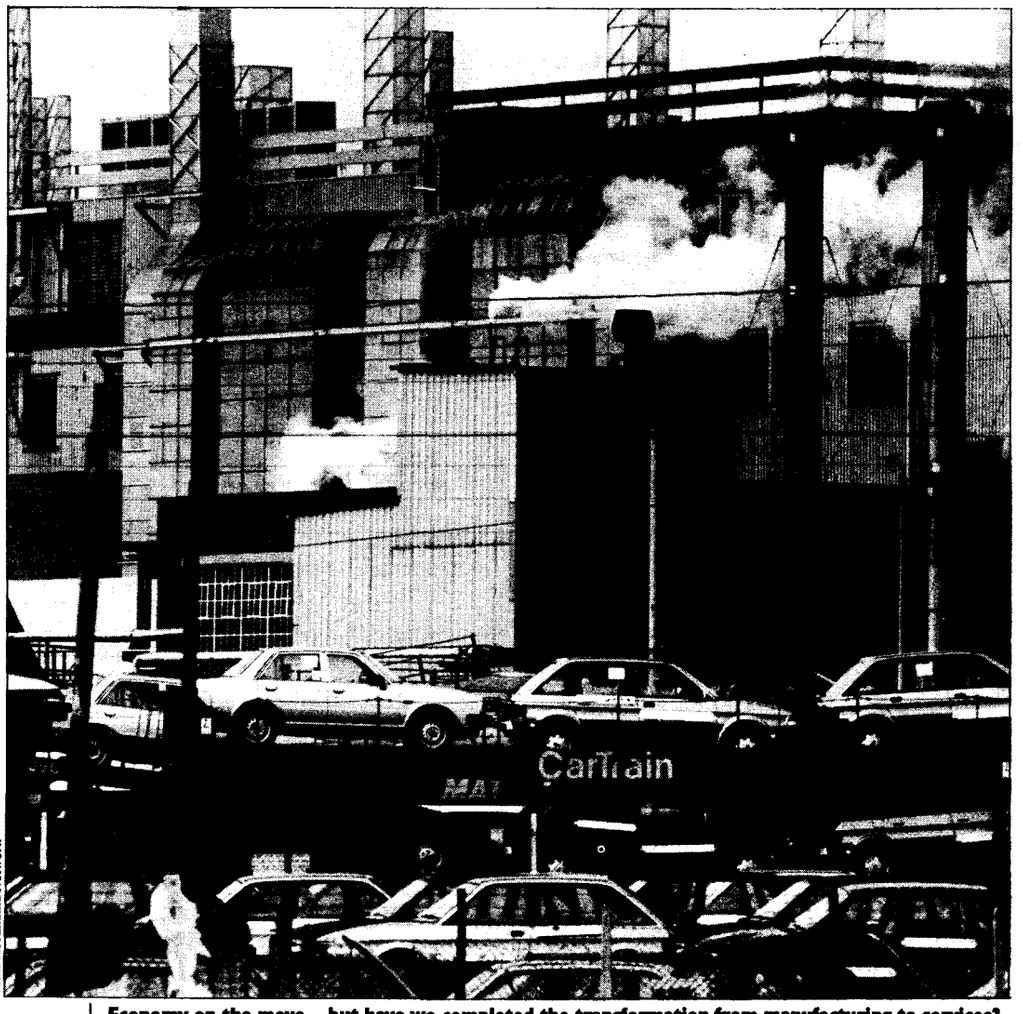
The financial world's concerns were further increased when the November economic statement disclosed a sharp rise in public spending. Yet despite that, the chancellor was able both to cut taxes in his spring budget, and to cut public borrowing by £3 billion.

The current perception of the markets could hardly be more different from that of last October. Britain is perceived as a success. It is the country in which every fund manager from Tokyo to New York wishes to invest. The pound is up, interest rates (including, naturally, the mortgage rate) are down, even the published unemployment figures seem set to continue falling. The transformation cannot surely be real, and to anyone in opposition the temptation to assume that the Tories have somehow engineered this pre-election boom is overwhelming. It must be a trick.

It is a tempting line of argument, but ultimately an unhelpful one. If it were a trick, it must have been one capable of fooling the foreign financiers as well as the British electorate, two constituencies with quite opposite tastes. Governments are not that clever, nor economies so susceptible to manipulation to deliver such a result.

There has, to be sure, been some marginal improvement in the economic numbers. The current account, which the chancellor expected to be in deficit to the tune of £2.5 billion even in March, has in fact been in surplus for most of this year, largely as a result of a higher-than-expected surplus on invisible account. It is not clear how real the improvement is – invisible figures are always inspired guesswork – but the figures are undoubtedly better than expected. Inflation, forecast to reach 4.5% by the middle of this year, did rise to 4.2% in April, but is still expected to turn down later in the year. The oil price now is back to about $19 a barrel, up from around $15 at the end of last year. And though the government does not publish unemployment forecasts, it appears to be falling slightly faster than the treasury expected.

One aspect of this improvement which may not be sustainable is the way the fall in sterling last autumn gave a boost to manufacturing exports, a boost which in turn will have nudged up growth prospects for this year. To some extent the improved prospect for exports will



Mike Abrahams/Network

Economy on the move – but have we completed the transformation from manufacturing to services?

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have been reversed by the recent rise in the pound, though growth this year looks set to be more than 3%, the fastest in Europe.

But this is all pretty marginal stuff. The overriding force which is pushing the pound up and interest rates down – and so creating this aura of success – is not some real or imagined improvement in UK economic performance. It is foreign funds coming in because the Japanese cannot invest all their savings at home, and the main alternative haven for their spare funds, the US, suddenly appears a worse prospect. It is much more realistic to see Britain as being struck by one of those curious swings in fashion which strike the world investment community, than any material change in the economy. We are victims of fashion, not intrigue.

But this prompts the obvious question: how quickly might fashion shift the money out again? For the world is awash with money. It is not just that British monetary growth has been very rapid. Financial markets in virtually every developed country are close to all-time 'highs'. Everyone knows that stock markets do not rise for ever. So somewhere out there a harsh reaction is waiting.

This will come, and it will hurt. Whether this strikes Britain more severely than other industrial nations depends partly on perceptions of our competitiveness as a modern developed nation. The big question is whether we have completed the great transformation from being principally a manufacturing nation to being principally a service one. Can we export enough services (plus high value-added manufactured goods) to cover the loss of revenue from oil exports?

We are now perhaps three-quarters of the way through this big restructuring. The next government, whatever its make-up, has to cope with the consequences of the shift. In that sense, the ground of the economic debate really has moved during eight years of Tory rule. ●

Hamish McRae

Poll appeal: Fighting elections can be a drain on funds and personnel

Bullets Before Ballots

The killing of eight members of the Provisional IRA as they attacked a police station in the Protestant village of Lough Gall has been hailed as a brilliant success for the security forces in Northern Ireland and a devastating defeat for the IRA.

There's no doubt that the 'Lough Gall Massacre', as it is already known in Catholic areas, was a severe blow in personal as well as political terms for the Provisionals. But the IRA is an organisation which learned long ago how to turn its defeats to its own long-term advantage. Already the fact that the eight men were shot without warning in a carefully-planned ambush, when they almost certainly could have been apprehended with much less violence, has helped to turn them into martyrs for whom ballads will be sung for years to come.

Lough Gall happened at a time when the IRA was riding high after a string of terrorist successes, culminating in the murder of a senior High Court judge. Many Catholics in Northern Ireland see Lough Gall as a straightforward reprisal for the killing of Sir Maurice Gibson and his wife.

This upsurge in IRA violence has provoked speculation that the Provisionals have virtually abandoned politics as a means of pursuing their objectives of British withdrawal and a united Ireland.

There have been suggestions in the media that Sinn Fein's disastrous showing in the general election in the Irish Republic has unbalanced the relationship between the political leadership of the Republican movement and the militarists, and strengthened the position of the latter. But Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness and the others have never tried to distance themselves from the IRA's campaign of violence. On the contrary, they have been explicit that British withdrawal from Northern Ireland is their first priority and that this can only be achieved by 'the cutting edge of the IRA'.

What Republican theorists do admit is that there is a different emphasis to the campaign at different times. Partly this is a question of resources. Fighting general elections takes a lot of money and skilled personnel, so does waging a guerrilla campaign. Often the resources aren't adequate for both. It is also true that the poor showing by Sinn Fein in the general election in the Republic had a serious effect on morale at grass roots level particularly for the prisoners in the North.

More than most political parties, Provisional Sinn Fein subscribes literally to the dictum that politics is the pursuit of war by other means. Its leaders want to win seats in parliamentary elections primarily for propaganda reasons, and for a series of platforms from which they can argue the case for British withdrawal from Ireland. In Britain and on the international circuit Gerry Adams is taken more seriously because he is an MP. If the Provisionals had done well in the Southern election, it would have become much more difficult for the Irish government to maintain the ban prohibiting Sinn Fein from appearing on television and radio. It would also have put pressure on Charles Haughey to adopt a more aggressive stance towards the British.

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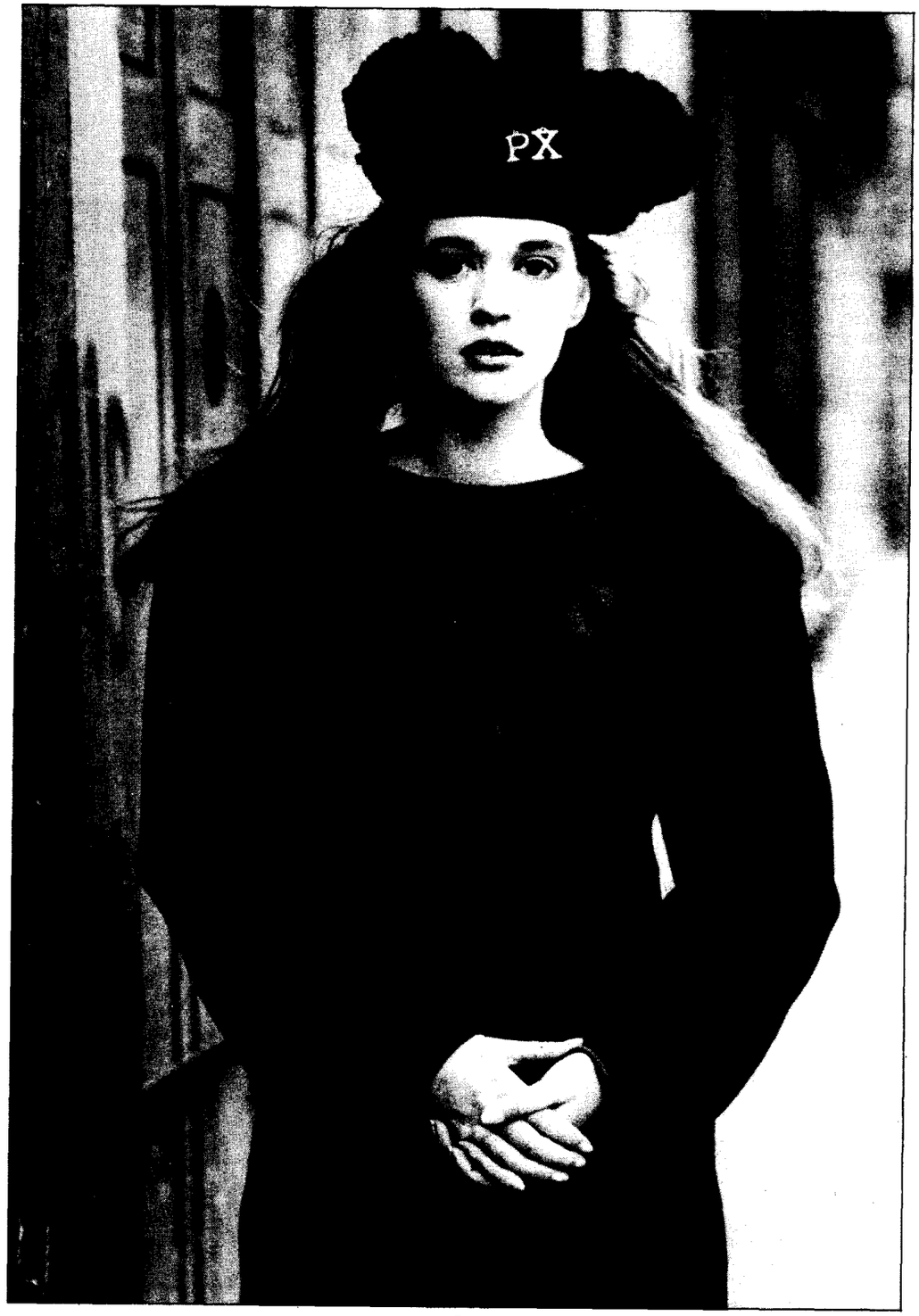

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Laurie Sparham/Network

The draw of the gun: An IRA mural in a Catholic ghetto

Instead, the Provisionals have had to retrench and rethink. In these circumstances the safest thing to do politically is to return to the proven methods popular with the rank and file, of conducting the war by way of the bomb and the bullet. Its recent successes in Northern Ireland show that the IRA has been able to reorganise its resources with considerable skill and ingenuity. Lough Gall was neither clever nor ingenious – that, almost as much as the loss of eight men, will be a cause for much heartsearching within the IRA. The problem of informers has not been solved and this could led to ugly reprisals. However it has access to weapons and explosives and has recently been training new recruits almost nightly in attacks on police stations and army posts. More important, though this may seem relative in Britain, it has shown that it is capable of a quite new ruthlessness in terms of what it now regards as legitimate targets and in the methods it uses. So far it has faced serious problems in mounting a campaign in mainland Britain but Republican sources say that it is only a matter of time before 'the right people' are found or come foward to organise such a campaign.

Whatever the successes and failures of their campaign, it is essential for the Provisionals to retain the support of the Catholics living in the ghetto areas of Derry, Belfast and in their rural strongholds. Here they have been helped almost inevitably in recent months by British government policy. From the start, the Anglo Irish agreement which was signed at Hillsborough in November 1985 was aimed at winning the support of the moderates in Northern Ireland. On the Catholic side that meant bolstering support for the constitutional methods of the SDLP and cutting away at Sinn Fein. There is evidence that this has been achieved, but at a cost. While the Sinn Fein vote may have declined in elections, the agreement has left ghetto Catholics living in areas of high deprivation and unemployment more isolated than ever, particularly the disaffected young who feel that only Sinn Fein speaks for them.

The mother of one of the young IRA men who was killed at Lough Gall had this to say about his death: 'He had been picked up and harassed by the police since he was 15 years old. There was one policeman in particular who used to just kick him. That was a part of it. He wanted to get his own back on them.' Seamus Donnelly was 19 when he died. He was born in 1968, the year the present troubles started in Northern Ireland. The ghettoes are full of teenagers like him. ●

Mary Holland

Women Hold The Balance

In Iceland's recent Parliamentary elections the Women's Party, Kvennalistinn, achieved a remarkable victory, winning over 10% of the total vote and effectively holding the balance of power. Since the beginning of this century there have been at least 18 national women's parties in 12 separate West European countries, but only three of these parties have ever won any seats: Kvennalistinn now has six.

Kvennalistinn was founded in 1983, inspired by previous electoral successes by two local women's parties. The focal point of the party's platform is that women, because of their role in rearing and raising children, perform different work and *therefore* have a *different* set of values to those dominant in the male world.

What factors contributed to the party's remarkable success? The majority of women work outside the home, which undoubtedly strengthens their independence and the development of gender-consciousness. And Kvennalistinn was able to build on the already-proven electoral success of women's parties.

Iceland's small size personalises politics: most politicians come from a small number of well-known families. Such a closed system of recruitment and selection has traditionally worked against women, so their representation in Parliament and local councils – at 5% until 1983 – was far behind most other West European countries.

Social and political homogeneity allows a distinction in political views between men and women to take a higher profile. And, being isolated, Iceland's politics focus strongly on internal affairs. The women's party's strong accent on small-scale projects, preservation of the environment and an economic policy based on the principles of domestic housekeeping, fitted well this political culture. ●

Monique Leyenaar

Greece's New Left

While Mr Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* have done little so far to shake the orthodoxy of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the small Eurocommunist party (KKE Interior) has attempted a leap forward.

Following a decision, albeit by a narrow margin, of its fourth congress a year ago, the majority of the KKE Interior led by Leonidas Kyrkos, its charismatic leader and sole MP, moved swiftly to establish a new organisation together with other left-wing forces. And in April this year a new political party of left-wing socialist orientation was born, called the Greek Left, and claiming 12,000 members, of which only a half belonged to the KKE Interior. The Eurocommunist element, though strong, is only one among several, particularly Greens and feminists.

The sad fact is that the KKE Interior, which split from the KKE in 1968, has failed to challenge the dominance of that party's orthodox Communism.

It is widely believed that the KKE Interior has had a major intellectual, cultural and moral impact on the political life of Greece since the fall of the military regime in 1974 and the restoration of parliamentary democracy. But despite this, its electoral performance has been poor and erratic (at its apex just over 5% in the European and just under 3% in the national elections). Further, the combined Communist vote has hardly improved over the past 50 years or so and the KKE Interior has been confined to the role of a prophet without honour at home.

On paper the Greek Left looks promising and impressive by Greek political standards.

Its founding congress was characterised by complete openness, full exposure to the media and high standards of political debate. Unity was sought over prog-

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rammatic principles and policies, not ideological consensus. A more realistic assessment of important policy issues such as Nato membership or the presence of US military bases has replaced a strong ideological stance. Democratic socialism and participatory democracy are strongly emphasised in an apparent effort to avoid both authoritarian socialist models and social-democratic solutions in facing up to the country's present severe social and economic problems.

The launch of the new party is arguably most timely, since the ruling socialist-populist Pasok (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) is undergoing its own serious crisis and the government faces massive protests against its economic austerity programme introduced in October 1985. The implementation of a strict incomes policy has profoundly shaken Pasok's ordinary voters, but it is not clear as yet whether a fundamental or irreversible shift in political allegiances has taken place. Both the KKE and the Greek Left are hoping to capitalise on this situation.

It is certain that the Greek Left will seek to capture and dominate the political space between Pasok and the KKE and try to attract, among others, disenchanted supporters from both. However, it is doubtful whether it will succeed where the Eurocommunists failed, that is, to win a substantial influence in the trade union movement, or more generally, sufficient popular support to enable the party to claim a major role in the political arena. The crunch will come at the next general election, due no later than June 1989.

Until then a realignment of the Left of the political spectrum, though theoretically possible, is seen as an extremely difficult task. Whether the Greek Left's young and educated members (55% belong to the 25-45 age group and 45% are university graduates) will rise to the challenge, is a very open question. ●

Vassilis Kapetanyannis

Common Future

Unlike Willy Brandt's *North-South* report which received worldwide attention several years ago, *Our Common Future* (better known as the Bruntland Report) has been greeted with more subdued interest. It was produced by the World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by the first prime minister to have a background in environmental issues: Gro Harlem Bruntland from Norway.

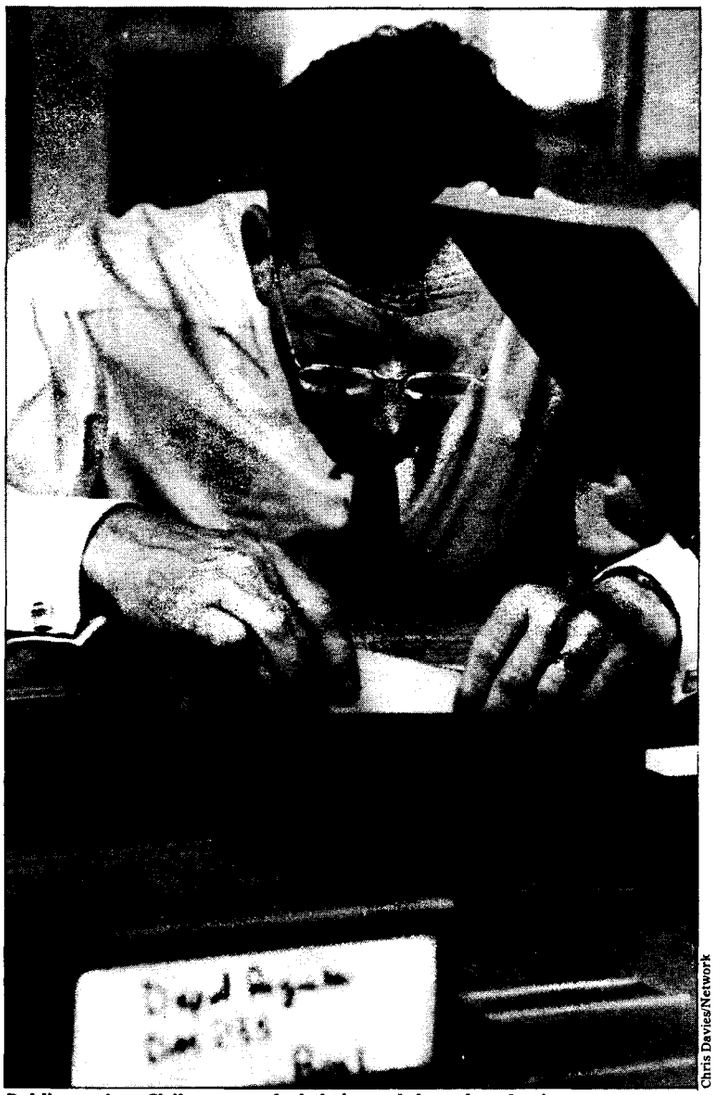
The report itself is a devastating analysis of the global environmental crisis overwhelming humankind and the planet. The crisis is of population growth and declining living standards; of species and ecosystem destruction at a dramatic pace; of fossil fuel combustion with no thought for acidification and global warming. And the report points out time and again that the crisis is caused by the short-sighted and selfish behaviour of governments and companies in north and south.

Unlike many United Nations inspired documents however, it is also a radical report. On energy for example, it dismisses nuclear power as a major solution to our problems, pointing out the industry's own problems of waste disposal and severe accidents. It argues that 'energy efficiency policies must be the cutting edge of national energy strategies'.

The weakness of *Our Common Future* is that too many of the solutions depend on rapid, co-ordinated action by institutions and agencies that have in the past failed miserably to protect the environment and to promote sustainable development. So who is this report for, and will anyone read it?

Bruntland herself is under no illusions. She stresses that 'first and foremost our message is directed towards people, whose well-being is the ultimate goal of all environmental and development policies'. ●

Stewart Boyle



Chris Davies/Network

Public service: Civil servants feel their work is undervalued

Unloved And Underpaid

The most disruptive action Britain's nurses had to take to get their recent pay award of 9.5% was to charter a boat on the Thames and upset the river police. With MPs waving dutifully from the Commons terrace, the vessel went round in circles off Westminster Pier while a captive audience of journalists on board was fed chilled white wine, chicken drumsticks and the merits of the nurses' case.

Not that the media needs much convincing to produce its annual, and quite exceptional, support for a big rise for the 'angels'. Nor, as it turned out, did Mrs Thatcher need much persuading to honour the nurses' pay review body recommendations in full in a fit of pre-election generosity. But the relative success of the nurses' propaganda-based pay campaigns of the past five years had not passed unnoticed in the wider labour movement.

In a new book, *Nurses – Politics and Power* Royal College of Nursing general secretary Trevor Clay goes as far as to claim that it is his

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union – not the so-called new realists of the EEPTU or the new image-builders of the GMBU – which is setting the trend for the labour movement. These days, he argues, industrial struggles are won and lost not on the picket line, not even across the negotiating table, but on what he calls the balance sheet of public opinion.

The present civil service dispute suggests that unions in other spheres are beginning to take this argument to heart. For the first time in a national pay dispute of any kind, the three unions involved have retained consultant advisors, Epic Industrial Communications, to orchestrate publicity for the duration. The resulting Campaign for a Better Civil Service has deliberately played down pay issues and played up the decline in the standard of service of government departments.

The campaign is aimed partly at uniting the three unions' 250,000 members behind a common banner. Although their pay *claim* is a common one of 15% or £20 a week, their pay *rates* vary widely from the £5,499 top-of-the-scale salary of an administrative assistant in the CPSA clerical union to the £14,629 of a senior executive officer in the middle managers' SCPS.

Apprehension about joining the 'bosses' union' has so far held CPSA members back from the logical step of merging with the SCPS. On the part of SCPS members, meanwhile, there is evident distaste at the antics of the young Militant Tendency and SWP activists of the CPSA. Throw in Nipsa, the Northern Ireland union which makes up the third arm of the alliance, and you have a truly mixed bag fighting the dispute.

Epic has plugged two common themes in its numerous leaflets, newspapers, posters and gimmicks. First, it has stressed an overall fall of 20% in civil service pay rates since 1980, relative to the private sector. Second, and more significantly, it has dwelt upon how essentially rotten life in the civil service has become under Thatcher, how – like the nurses – civil servants are constantly struggling to cope with inadequate resources and how they get no thanks for it.

And this does seem to have touched a nerve: union members in the most unlikely places, such as Finchley, are saying they are fed up with what is perceived as the government's constant denigration of public servants; support for the selective strikes has been impressive, particularly as the government's varying and mostly staged pay offers are actually worth more overall than the Treasury's 4.6% costing.

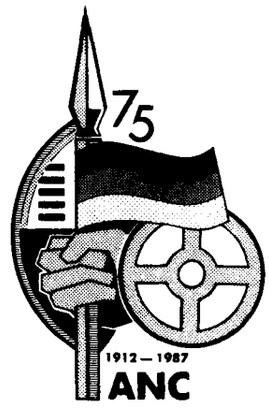
Yet the Epic campaign appears to have made little impact on the wider public, which was its primary target. The main aim was to win national media coverage, but the press has not bought the rather forced campaign theme that it is seven years since civil servants last had a decent pay rise. (Hence seven low paid workers were brought to a press conference; and leaflets distributed on picket lines set out seven reasons for striking.) Nor, more importantly, is there any hard evidence of the public clamouring for better services.

It is tempting to conclude that Thatcherite Britain cares little about the state of the civil service and less about the people who staff it, that everybody loves a nurse and nobody loves a civil servant, that the Clay stategy is therefore one of very limited relevance.

That would be hasty. Epic's campaign for the civil servants was probably started too late and too cheaply to make a real impact on Clay's balance sheet of public opinion. As the nurses have demonstrated, it may take several years of propagandising to register a cause or grievance on the public consciousness.

For this year, though, the harsh lesson remains that while a nurse may not have to take it out on a patient to get better pay and conditions, a DHSS clerk still has to take it out on a claimant. ●

David Brindle



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This advertisement has been produced and paid for by supporters of the African National Congress in its 75th Anniversary Year. Since 1912, the ANC has stood for a new South Africa, a South Africa where human dignity and equality will prevail in the life of all its peoples and the country.

WHAT KIND OF RÉGIME JAILS AN EIGHT-YEAR OLD FOR 'INTIMIDATION'?

In South Africa, little Amos Khubeka, just 8 years old was arrested and charged with 'intimidation.' He was detained and refused bail. When his family finally saw him in the Middleburg Magistrates Court, his forehead was badly bruised and he was crying.

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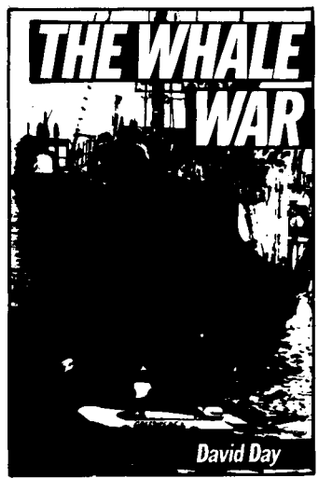

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LETTERS

Changing Times

As the chances of a Labour Party victory slip through our political fingers and the Left, by and large, hides its head in the sand, the strategy propounded by Hobsbawm (*MT* May) offers the possibility of keeping out of government a party with the self-declared aim of wiping socialism off the British political map.

Hobsbawm's thesis is based on the tactical necessity of voting for the party most likely to defeat each Tory candidate. If this were the only aim it would appear to be a sensible one. It does in fact offer much more.

Unfortunately Hobsbawm still sees a Labour victory as the best possible way of moving towards a more socialist/democratic Britain. However the development since the 60s of new social movements organised around issues such as gender, race and the environment challenges this assumption, as does the existence of a third electoral force. The Labour Party is no longer (was it ever?) *the* representative of an increasingly heterogeneous working class.

A strategy based on the view that democratic change is dependent on victory at the polls for Labour is therefore problematic. It avoids the question of the deeper transformations that are needed in British society, in particular the need for democratisation – starting with our electoral system, but including all the institutions of the state and civil society.

Thus the prospect of a coalition government committed to democratic forms, and to proportional representation, offers more hope than any outright Labour victory.

The machismo of politics works in favour of party machines, block votes, intolerance and political aggression; and against dialogue, empathy and identification of shared needs. Yet at a recent meeting in Hull three women speakers from the Communist Party, Green Party and the Liberals all spoke the same language of empowerment and democratisation. This indicates the possiblity of a socialist electoral strategy which uses as its criteria for supporting candidates not political labels or the efficiency of a political machine but the politics and personality of the individual concerned.

Such a strategy combined with an electoral system that gives each voter an equal say in the political outcome, would facilitate the involvement of smaller parties and pressure groups and would encourage political pluralism.

Ironically it is the Alliance, and not Labour, who recognise and understand the need for such changes.

The Labour Party is ham-strung by its own paternalism. Daddy is going to get a shock at the next election. ●
Janie Glen, Hull

Democracy

In the criticisms of Hobsbawm, one fact is omitted – Labour needs an 11% swing to win the election. Instead there have been conversions to electoral reform; calls for recognition of the Alliance; accusations that the public can't work out the tactical options; and attempts to dismiss the SDP as class 'traitors' – but none alter the present logistics.

Underpinning opposition to tactical voting is a labour movement history of undemocratic voting practices – or no voting at all! In my own union, the EETPU, the Left's inability to agree a common candidate in some of the few national elections held has sustained right-wing control for 25 years. Reform is needed, and, as Neal Ascherson suggests, successful tactical voting may open the way to break with the 'institutions of an *ancien regime*' – and in areas other than parliamentary.

Unfortunately, no guarantees can be offered about the results of tactical voting given its infancy as a political tactic. But if it could achieve a Tory-free Scotland or a way of lessening the harm of further Thatcherite policies, then these alone must be better than five more years of unalloyed Thatcherism.

The onus for the Left is to ensure that these are the *minimum* that will be achieved in the coming general election. This time there will be no forgiveness for those who turn inwards to left rhetoric about the long hard job of building socialism or attack those like Hobsbawm or *Marxism Today* who try to thwart Thatcherism. Clearly they have to be reminded that the left doesn't exist for itself, but for people. ●
Bert Munro, London

Communist Tactics

Independent Communist electoral activity is an essential aspect of developing the movement necessary to defeat Thatcherism. Communist participation yields not mathematical but political results.

In a ward in Nottingham, a marginal one, over a period a Communist stood in alternate years. On these occasions a Labour councillor was returned. In the years in between when no Communist stood the Tories won. That is politics not mathematics.

In 1979 in Birmingham Northfield there was no Communist candidate. The Tories took the seat from Labour. In the 1982 by-election there was an excellent campaign around a Communist candidate especially on issues not dealt with by Labour – nuclear disarmament, opposition to racism and fascism and support for women's liberation. The Communists doubled their 1974 vote, while Labour regained the seat.

Whilst I am at one with Eric Hobsbawm on the need for a strategy to defeat Thatcherism I do not think you can sacrifice long term considerations. These are the essential requirements in a parliament of the kind envisaged in *The British Road to Socialism* of a group of Communist MPs. The electoral base for this has to be constructed now, even within the strait-jacket of the British electoral system.

Tactical voting as far as constituencies with Communist candidates are concerned would be counter-productive in the short term and in the long run counter to a socialist strategy. ●
John Peck, Nottingham

Watching TV87

The worldwide failure of the Left in the last 40 years has been its incompetence at assembling parliamentary majorities, and its inability to maintain them once assembled. So it is encouraging to see Eric Hobsbawm and others starting to advocate tactical voting as a practical action which could help to produce such a majority.

Hobsbawm tells us that he saw the need for tactical voting four years ago. But he does not explain why nobody was able to use that insight as the basis of practical action. Hobsbawm rallies his readers to vote for whoever can keep out the Tory. But he does not deign to mention the 'Tactical Voting 87' campaign which is trying to carry that message to a much wider audience.

With its neglect of any action which involves ordinary people, Hobsbawm's position remains 'Theoretical analysis rules, OK'. Meanwhile, out in the real world the unemployed, the homeless, the sick, and the victims of criminality and discrimination must wait for help until the Left can get its act together.

Those of us who are active in the TV87 campaign do not believe we can change the world sitting round kitchen tables in North London. But we have done our part by raising people's awareness of what tactical voting can do. The number of people exercising tactical votes in the 1987 election will be greater than it otherwise would have been, and the Tories will end up with fewer seats than they would otherwise have had. ●
Tim Johnson, London

The PR Carrot

In Chelmsford in the 1983 election, Norman St John-Stevas gained 47.6% of the votes, the Alliance 47.00% and Labour 5.1%. The Tories have a new candidate, and since it is very unlikely that Labour will win the seat, if Labour supporters want to oust the Tories then they'd be better off voting Alliance. However, in many constituencies tactical voting may not work.

If Labour want to attract tactical votes from the Alliance, all they need to do is have PR in their manifesto, as a party that advocates socialism should. PR is the 'carrot' that attracts many towards the Alliance. ●
Nigel Bedrock, Chelmsford

Cartoon: Nick Newman

PS

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Labour's Prospects

A Party In Search Of Power

Bryan Gould has emerged as a key figure in the Labour leadership and as one of its most effective performers during the election campaign. Here he speaks to *Beatrix Campbell*

Bryan Gould was born in New Zealand in 1939, the son of a bank manager. After reading history and law at Wellington and Auckland universities, he won a Rhodes Scholorship to Oxford. Following a period in the diplomatic service and teaching at Oxford, he won the Southampton Test seat for Labour in 1979. He is now MP for Dagenham in East London, a shadow economics spokesman and Labour's election campaign organiser.

As the election draws near, do you feel that the Labour Party faces a crisis of moral appeal? There seems to be a drastic gap between what people feel about such issues as unemployment, equality and sexual politics, and whether they vote Labour.

We know we are part of a failing society, that the community is disintegrating around us, that there are people that are dealt with unfairly. But people say 'we cannot do anything about it, the problems are too great for us, we feel powerless, our government tells us there is nothing to be done, it is a worldwide problem, it is the microchip, it is all sorts of things we cannot grapple with. So our only realistic response is to look after the people we have direct responsibility for – ourselves, families'. What people do not believe is our ability to deliver. They just do not think we are technically competent enough. Yes, it is a major problem which faces the Labour Party.

People say they would rather have spending on services than on tax cuts. They say they perceive the Labour Party has the best policies on these issues but we do not get the votes. A reason for that is partly that we are one of the few countries whose leadership has told its citizens they are washed out, that there is no alternative to four million unemployed, to running down services. For 18-24 year olds that is their only experience, it is all they know.

There is a grave danger of a substantial under-class which finds no representative at all. The Labour Party is failing for all sorts of moral, ideological, traditional, historical reasons. It is our task to represent those people.

Why should they believe you?

I do not want to get on to denigrating all that Labour has done in the past because I believe that a lot of advances we have made are attributable to Labour governments. I think that if we can scrape through an election victory, this is the acid test: we have got to deliver this time. We have got to deliver some economic success and do the social things we stand for. What has always happened in the past is that they ended up deflating the economy, or whatever. They listened to the City.

I would claim that my radicalism – and I feel myself to be very radical, in many ways more than people who say that they are far to the left of Bryan Gould – is that if I had anything to do with it I would not listen to the City, I would run this economy to produce the wealth that we are capable of producing, and use it in the interests of our people.

What political resources can you and another Labour govenment gather round you that would enable you to say that? No other Labour government has taken such a stance.

I would not pretend to be optimistic. I think it almost entirely a case of intellectual confidence and political self-will. It is a question of calling bluff. To say OK we live in a world where capital markets are highly volatile, yes of course the pound will dash up and down. But why the hell should we hitch our real economic policies to measures which we know are going to move wildly over a short period? In many ways the internationalisation of the City will even help us if we are brave enough.

You suggest that British capital is more prejudiced, more conservative, more anti-Labour than international capital.

Capital will go where capitalists see economies being run successfully. I think capitalists, bankers etc, will always adapt. In the latter years of the Callaghan government the monthly figures for sterling M3 were headline news and changed the economic policy month by month. The Healey budget in 1978 had to be reversed because the money markets held off buying gilts.

How would you have done it differently? Are you not also implicated in Labour's crucifying weakness at that time?

I am not guilty to the second charge. I was not a junior minister, I had difficulty in getting my voice heard at all. People in power at that time will tell you I used to get up at meetings and write articles. *The Guardian* published an article of mine on January 4, 1978 which predicted what would happen under both a Labour and a Tory government. I held my corner. I was regarded as one of the better of the '74 intake – but nobody ever offered me a job because I was just too critical.

Turning to Labour today, we now have a situation where a minority, 36%, of trade unionists are voting Labour. So there is a crisis – it is no longer guaranteed that if

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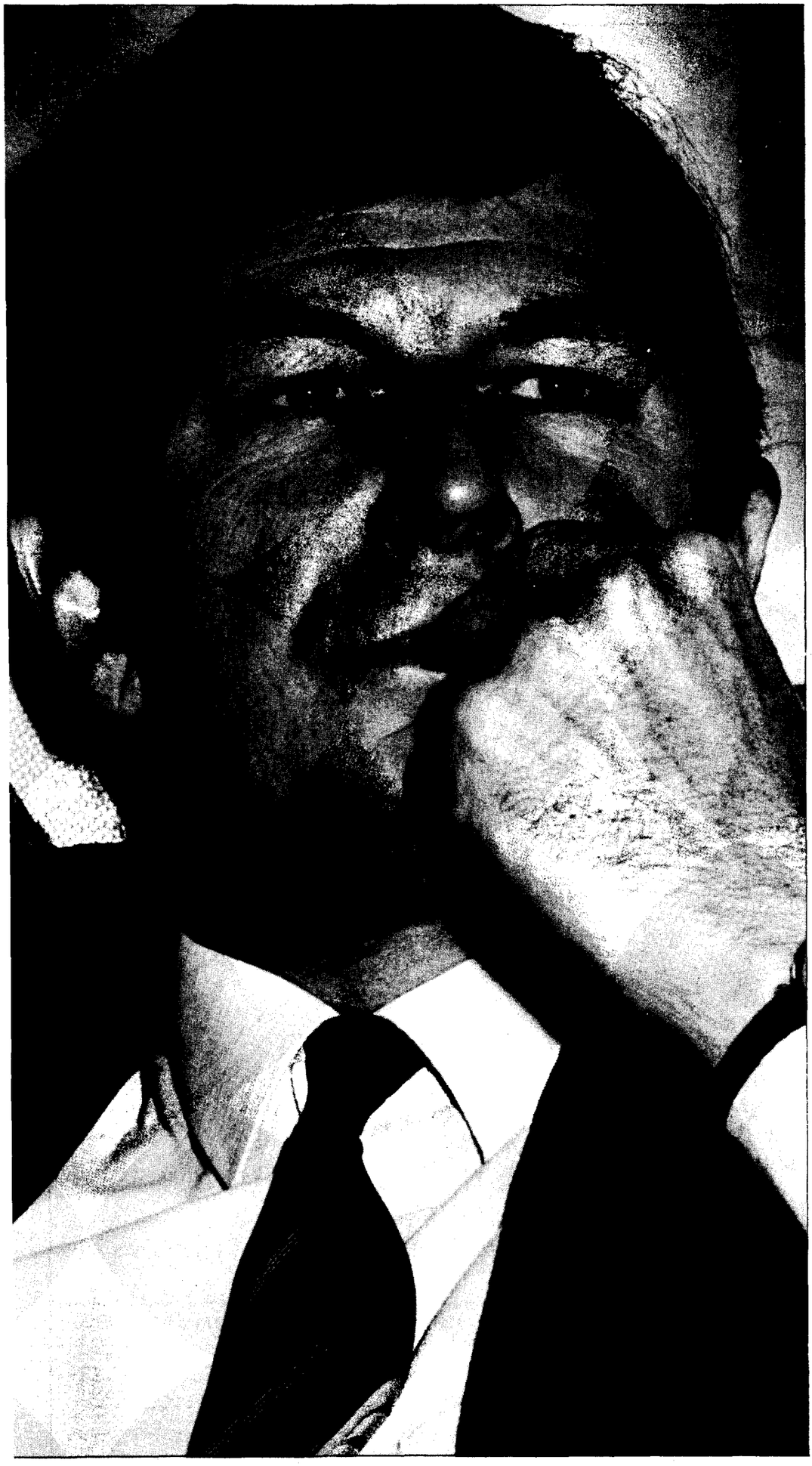

you are in a union you are going to be a Labour voter. The culture of trade unionism does not produce an automatic sense of affiliation to the Labour Party. That is a crisis for the party. There is something very unstable in the relationship of trade unionists as individuals to Labour and Labour's relationship to the unions as a corporate force. Where do you want that relationship to go to?

You are correct to draw distinctions between Labour's relations with individual trade unionists and trade unionism as a corporate body. Our problem with individual trade unionists is almost indistinguishable from our problem with the electorate as a whole. When we plan our campaigning we tend to say we will target trade unionists. One of the difficulties of that is that most trade unionists see themselves in other groups, not as trade unionists.

Looking at corporate relationships: what part do trade unions play? Any Labour government has to stay very closely in touch with unions as a corporate presence in our society. It is then for unions themselves with the help of a Labour government to build the individual identification of their members as trade unionists, looking to the Labour government to defend and protect their interests. The first step is to make sure that union structures and leaderships are seen to be close to the Labour Party. I am rebutting the point that we are deliberately wanting to distance ourselves, that we think unions are a clapped-out, dying part of society – that is not my view at all. I see the structure of the union movement as still immensely important. Our job is not to shuffle it off but to breathe life again into the business of being a trade unionist.

You seem to take management seriously, whether the management of the economy or of the party. You want it to be *efficient*, but you are not a *struggle* person, you are not a *movement* person.

I am learning, I am relatively new to big movement politics. I am not used to getting groups of people, gathering support and organising campaigns. My instinct is to work out a view of my own and put it forward and hope that people will agree with it. While you're right to say I am not a movement person or a struggle person, it is because I have not done it so far, but I am not averse to it. I think it is a very difficult and complicated business and there are techniques you have to learn which are a nuisance. I suppose here it is my academic background that holds me back. I am inclined to assume that the power of the idea will work. This may be a cop-out on my part, but I am inclined to think what matters is to get the power.

I remember somebody saying to me, well 'all you lot who muck about in the women's movement are basically wasting your time – the thing to go for is power. That is why I am in the Labour Party – we

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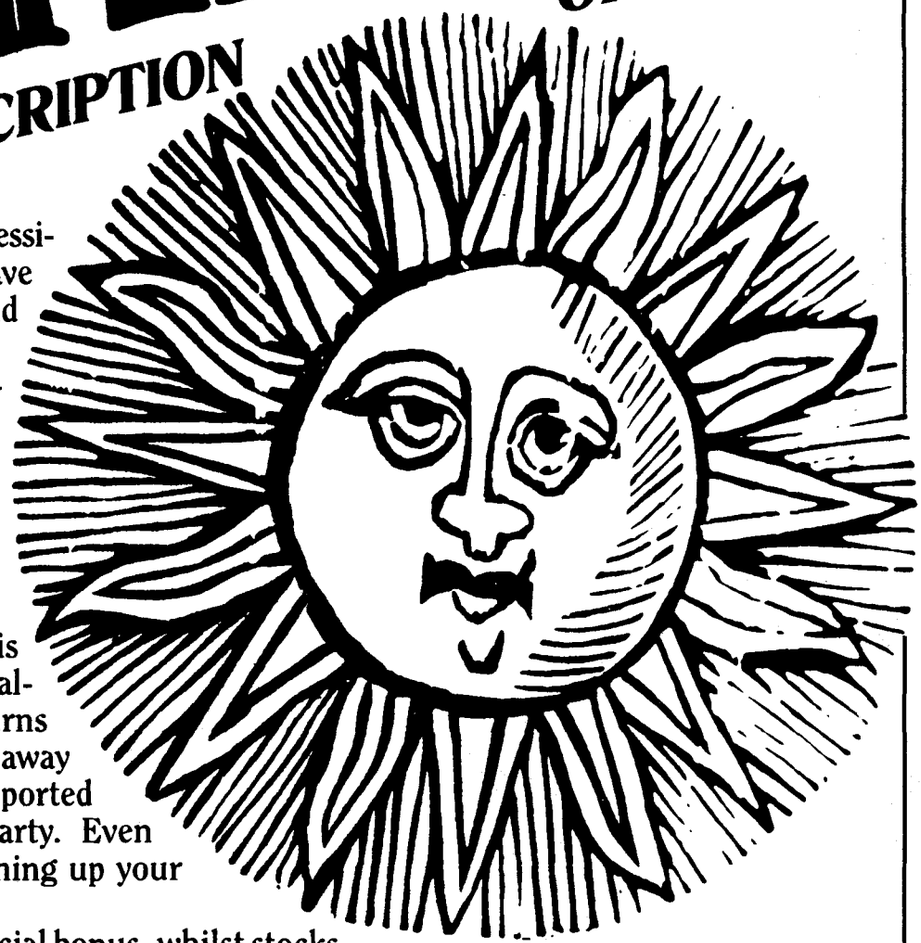

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have got to get our hands on power.' Would you subscribe to that approach?
I would say by way of defence that I am making some sort of assessment of my own strengths and weaknesses, and I would say that I can see myself achieving radical changes by doing it *with power*. But I also welcome those who are creating the demand for change.

The frightening thing at the moment is that there is no sense of the Labour Party as a campaigning party, and no sense that initiatives like that, for instance, around the political fund ballot can be regenerated, no sense of Labour's ability to organise anything, to mobilise. So, when you talk about the quest for power how do you get there and stay there if you do not have coalitions built around you?
I think you are just confronting me with the central problem of the Labour Party. In my constituency if I knock on a door, which I do a lot – it is a very important part of politics – if I knock on the door and a person of retiring age comes to the door, that person will almost definitely say yes we vote Labour, we have always voted Labour, we would never think of doing anything else. If it is a person of 30 or less, they will judge the Labour Party like a product in a competitive market. The only reason that we are still in business at all is that we have loyalty from a large number of people, but it is a diminishing asset. What we have to do is rebuild commitment to the Labour Party. The problem is we cannot rebuild commitment in our position and with our record, because people will look at the last Labour government. I suppose what I am really saying is Labour in power has got to do better.

What about Labour when it is not in power, doesn't it have to be better as well?
Yes, but that is much more difficult in many ways. It is very easy to criticise Neil Kinnock, for example, but the position of the leader of the opposition is a terrible one. What can he do? The only executive power he has is over his own party, but otherwise he is just on the sidelines.

You seem to be a person who has not had a lot of pain in your relatively privileged life, in fact to have led a very sheltered life.
Yes, I think that is true, I think that I have led a fortunate life. I come from a different country – New Zealand. I was born in what we used to call a state house, considered now a council house. I went to the local state schools. Having said that, there was no question that my parents were middle class, my father spent all his life working for a bank. I was well into my 20s before I even worried about money. I won a scholarship which brought me to Oxford, and throughout the two years I spent there I cannot ever recall thinking about money. Of course I am privileged, because I was brought up in a caring family, I had a very secure childhood, I had a very good education, I have now the support of a lovely family. In that sense of course I have had a very easy life.

What connects you to the working class and to its culture and its experiences? What connects you to the culture of socialism? Your politics are not suffused with the language of class. It is significantly absent from your vocabulary.
Yes, I think that is true, and I think it is both a weakness and a source of strength. The area between my family and working class is a very narrow one. My parents would have always said that they were not working class and in many

other ways in the New Zealand of that era it really didn't make much sense to talk about that kind of distinction. Among my contemporaries and friends some went to school without shoes. But class didn't impinge very much on us. My wife's parents, who live near us, are working class, and although it is not my own personal family, there is that strong family connection to the working class.

British socialism, though not exhaustively connected with class, has its roots in institutional forms which are associated with class. You do not refer to those old symbols but neither do you seem to be very interested in a modern working class, which would have shoes, it may have wages, it may be mobile, it is culturally sophisticated. You do not plug into that either.
Well, I would dispute that. My socialism is more firmly grounded than that of many people whose socialism is born into them. It is a familiar phenomon on that as people who begin as working class socialists climb the political ladder, or any other ladder, they move rightwards. I do not see this happening to me. If anything I would say I have moved leftwards over the past 20 years.

What would the markers of that leftward drift be?
I would say that I began with a fairly generalised sense of outrage about social injustice. And that is still the emotional charge that drives me in politics. You say I don't mention class, the reason I don't is because I do not feel myself to be part of it, but I do think class is used in this country as an imprisonment. Class has been used to tell people what they are and what they should do and what their horizons should be, and what strikes me about the people in this country, and what so upsets me, is their willingness to accept what they are given. We talked earlier about my privileged life – the respect in which my life is most privileged is that in my own personal affairs I have the ability to enjoy most of the things I do. I'm interested in food, I like to cook, I like music. People come along and interview me and say 'oh you're a socialist opera-goer'. They want to categorise you all the time. I'm not. I never go to the opera.
The point I am making is that I want to see people in this country have the ability to widen their horizons, to choose what they want to do, not because they are brilliant at it but just to enjoy things. What depresses me is the misery of so many people's lives. If you are unemployed or a single parent, it is the lack of choices – everybody tells you what to do when you are in that situation. If you have got no income and want to move your flat because the neighbours are making your life hell, you can't. The choices for millions of people in this country are very limited and that is what drives me – it is not that I am saying the working class should prevail over other classes. I want a socialism which appeals to and embraces the majority of the people.

A lot of people on the left and on the right of the labour movement will understand your critique of authoritarian forms of management, the small 'c' conservative culture of the labour movement, symbols of labourism, which you say have not necessarily got anything to do with socialism. You say civil rights and individual rights cannot be suppressed in the notion of class. What I do not understand is what your socialism is, as something that would empower the people. What does it mean in terms of the balance of power in society?
Socialism is about people and society, society is a joint enterprise, to which we all make contributions simply by being there. The natural tendency of any society is to concentrate power and socialism is about resisting that, setting up institutions to counteract it, to make sure that everybody has maximum power over his or her life. All terribly general but it is a sort of theoretical notion of socialism. Socialism is about making sure people are not exploited and oppressed. I think the modern socialist should be attaching far more importance to the nature of equality, and by that I mean simple things like the distribution of incomes. We should

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be going much harder than in the past for actually compressing the range of incomes, such as by raising the lower level and by much more effective redistributive taxation.

There is a criticism now from the Left that Labour's plans for taxing top people are more conservative than the SDP's. And in any case we are talking about a tiny proportion of the population, and, even if they are heavily taxed, the revenue from that cannot sustain . . .

The argument for that sort of taxation is not that it is a major source of revenue for our social programmes – that revenue has to be found from general taxation. The problems of running the economy are very much technical and we can get those right. My view is that the major task of the Labour government is just to run the economy more successfully than we have done in the past and that will generate the wealth. But the case for compressing the distribution is social and political and moral. It is not that we think that is it going to produce vast sums of money.

Your personal image is modern man, perhaps a technocratic, efficient kind of Labour politician. How far do you feel modern when it comes to issues such as sexual politics, for instance gays and lesbians and their civil rights? How far do you feel in touch with movements such as feminism?

'We have loyalty from a large number of people, but it is a diminishing asset'

I may kid myself, but I feel very sympathetic towards this. I think I am intrinsically an anti-discriminationist, if there is such a term. Just as I feel no particular incubus of any sort in terms of class, nor do I in any other area. The fact that you are a woman interviewing me has not occurred to me, I think I just have a blind spot. I have a very well developed sense that in the tiny, minutest way I know what it feels like to be discriminated against, coming as a stranger, as an outsider, to a new country.

This may sound very arrogant, but in a sense I know what it feels like to be a woman, to have assumptions made all the time. I sat and stewed for months about a British Caledonian television advertisement – I eventually wrote to BCal and said I thought it was an outrageously sexist ad on a whole number of grounds. The reason I did that is because I do feel strongly about people being put down and patronising assumptions.

Do you have feminist friends?

I have feminist friends. The questions about reading – the answer is no but then I do not read anything. I read the reviews, but I do not get the time to read the actual text.

What about black sections?

We have not fully understood what it means to be black and to be claiming a voice within any organisation, let alone the Labour Party. I am not very keen on black sections as a solution to the problem, I do not like the sectarianism of it at all. In that sense I entirely take the view of socialism as being unifying not dividing, but as a means of demonstrating a sympathy and understanding I think we should be saying much more positively: we are looking forward to having black comrades in the PLP and if they want to set themselves up to have a black members group – fine as long as you stay within the rules of the PLP that is all we ask. I personally would regret it if you wanted to racially divide a group, but if that is what you want and it is within the rules, that is fine.

Finally, across the party it is felt that you are a nice man, even among people who do not share your political objectives. How do you feel about some of the difficulties that you have got in being a healing hand, so to speak?

Well, as I have said, I am learning fast in politics. My instinct in politics is to reach out to people, my instinct is to say do we agree? I am doing it, in a sense quite deliberately, ruthlessly. For the people for whom politics is a side show, a noisy rabble on the fringes of their lives who demand their attention from time to time, our job is to say 'look, what we stand for is worth supporting'. In those circumstances what you have to do is get people nodding in agreement with you. ●

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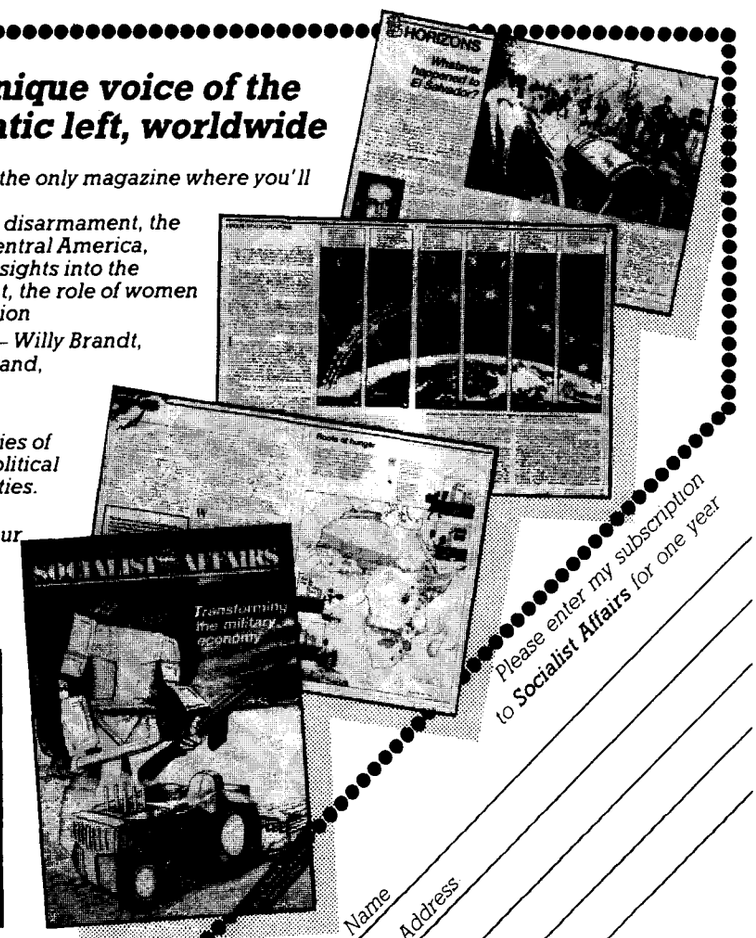
Honorary president of the Socialist International



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Gramsci And Us

The questions raised by a jailed Sardinian during the last war cast light on Thatcherism and the crisis of the Left, argues **Stuart Hall**

This is not a comprehensive exposition of the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, nor a systematic account of the political situation in Britain today. It is an attempt to 'think aloud' about some of the perplexing dilemmas facing the Left, in the light of – from the perspective of – Gramsci's work.

I do not claim that, in any simple way, Gramsci 'has the answers' or 'holds the key' to our present troubles. I do believe that we must 'think' our problems in a Gramscian way – which is different. We mustn't *use* Gramsci (as we have for so long abused Marx) like an Old Testament prophet who, at the correct moment, will offer us the consoling and appropriate quotation. We can't pluck up this 'Sardinian' from his specific and unique political formation, beam him down at the end of the 20th century, and ask him to solve our problems for us: especially since the whole thrust of his thinking was to refuse this easy transfer of generalisations from one conjuncture, nation or epoch to another.

The thing about Gramsci that really transformed my own way of thinking about politics is the question which arises from his *Prison Notebooks*. If you look at the classic texts of Marx and Lenin, you are led to expect a revolutionary epochal historical development emerging from the end of the First World War onwards. And indeed events did give considerable evidence that such a development was occuring. Gramsci belongs to this 'proletarian moment'. It occurred in Turin in the 1920s, and other places where people like Gramsci, in touch with the advance guard of the industrial working class – then at the very forefront of modern production – thought that, if only the managers and politicians would get out of the way, this class of proletarians could run the world, take over the factories, seize the whole machinery of society, materially transform it and manage it, economically, socially, culturally, technically.

The truth about the 1920s is that the 'proletarian moment' very nearly came off. Just before and after the First World War, it really was touch and go as to whether, under the leadership of such a class, the world might not have been transformed – as Russia was in 1917 by the Soviet revolution. This was the moment of the proletarian perspective on history.

What I have called 'Gramsci's question' in the *Notebooks* emerges in the aftermath of that moment, with the recognition that history was not going to go that way, especially in the advanced industrial capitalist societies of Western Europe. Gramsci had to confront the turning back, the failure, of that moment: the fact that such a moment, having passed, would never return in its old form. Gramsci, here, came face to face with the revolutionary character of history itself. When a conjuncture unrolls, there is no 'going back'. History shifts gears. The terrain changes. You are in a new moment. You have to attend, 'violently', with all the 'pessimism of the intellect' at your command, to the 'discipline of the conjuncture.'

In addition (and this is one of the main reasons why his thought is so pertinent to us today) he had to face the capacity of the Right – specifically, of European fascism – to hegemonise that defeat.

So here was a historic reversal of the revolutionary project, a new historical conjuncture, and a moment which the Right, rather than the Left, was able to dominate. This looks like a moment of total crisis for the Left, when all the reference points, the predictions, have been shot to bits. The political universe, as you have come to inhabit it, collapses.

I don't want to say that the Left in Britain is in exactly the same moment; but I do hope you recognise certain strikingly similar features, because it is the similarity between those two situations, that makes the question of the *Prison Notebooks* so seminal in helping us to understand what our condition is today. Gramsci gives us, not the tools with which to solve the puzzle, but the means with which to ask the right kinds of questions about the politics of the 80s and 90s. He does so by directing our attention unswervingly to what is *specific* and *different* about this moment. He always insists on this attention to difference. It's a lesson which the Left in Britain has yet to learn. We do tend to think that the Right is not only always with us, but is always exactly the same: the same people, with the same interests, thinking the same thoughts. We are living through the transformation of British Conservatism – its partial adaptation to the modern world, via the neo-liberal and monetarist 'revolutions'. Thatcherism has reconstructed Conservatism and the Conservative Party. The hard-faced, utilitarian, petty-bourgeois businessmen are now in charge, not the grouse-shooting, hunting and fishing classes. And yet, though those transformations are changing the political terrain of struggle before our very eyes, we think the differences don't have any *real* effect on anything. It still feels more 'left-wing' to say the old ruling class politics goes on in the same old way.

Gramsci, on the other hand, knew that difference and specificity mattered. So, instead of asking 'what would Gramsci say about Thatcherism?' we should simply attend to this rivetting of Gramsci to the notion of difference, to the specificity of a historical conjecture: how different forces come together, conjuncturally, to create the new terrain, on which a different politics must form up. That is the intuition that Gramsci offers us about the nature of political life, from which we can take a lead.

I want to say what I think 'the lessons of Gramsci' are, in relation, first of all, to Thatcherism and the project of the new Right; and, second, in terms of the crisis of the Left.

Here, I'm foregrounding only the sharp edge of what I understand by Thatcherism. I'm trying to address the opening, from the mid 1970s onwards, of a new political project on the Right. By a project, I don't mean (as Gramsci warned) a conspiracy. I mean the construction of a new agenda in British politics. Mrs Thatcher always aimed, not for a short electoral reversal, but for a long historical occupancy of power. That occupancy of power was not simply about commanding the apparatuses of the state. Indeed, the project was organised, in the early stages, in opposition to the

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Illustration: Clifford Harper

state, which in the Thatcherite view, had been deeply corrupted by the welfare state and by Keynesianism and had thus helped to 'corrupt' the British people. Thatcherism came into existence in contestation with the old Keynesian welfare state, with social democratic 'statism', which, in its view, had dominated the 60s. Thatcherism's project was to transform the state in order to restructure *society:* to decentre, to displace, the whole post-war formation; to reverse the political culture which had formed the basis of the political settlement – the historic compromise between labour and capital – which had been in place from 1945 onwards.

The depth of the reversal aimed for was profound: a reversal of the ground-rules of that settlement, of the social alliances which underpinned it and the values which made it popular. I don't mean the attitudes and values of the people who write books. I mean the ideas of the people who simply, in ordinary every-day life, have to calculate how to survive, how to look after those who are closest to them.

That is what is meant by saying that Thatcherism aimed for a reversal in ordinary common sense. The 'common sense' of the English people had been constructed around the notion that the last war has erected a barrier between the bad old days of the 30s and now: the welfare state had come to stay; we'd never go back to using the criterion of the market as a measure of people's needs, the needs of society. There would always have to be some additional, incremental, institutional force – the state, representing the general interest of society – to bring to bear against, to modify, the market. I'm perfectly well aware that socialism was not inaugurated in 1945. I'm talking about the taken-for-granted, popular base of welfare social democracy, which formed the real, concrete ground on which any socialism worth the name had to be built. Thatcherism was a project to engage, to contest, *that* project, and, wherever possible, to dismantle it, and to put something *new* in place. It entered the political field in a historic content, not just for power, but for popular authority, for hegemony.

It is a project – this confuses the Left no end – which is, simultaneously, regressive and progressive. Regressive because, in certain crucial respects, it takes us backwards. You couldn't be going anywhere else but backwards to hold up before the British people, at the end of the 20th century, the idea that the best the future holds is for them to become, for a second time, 'Eminent Victorians'. It's deeply regressive, ancient and archaic.

But don't misunderstand it. It's also a project of 'modernisation'. It's a form of *regressive modernisation.* Because, at the same time, Thatcherism had its beady eye fixed on one of the most profound historical facts about the British social formation: that it never ever

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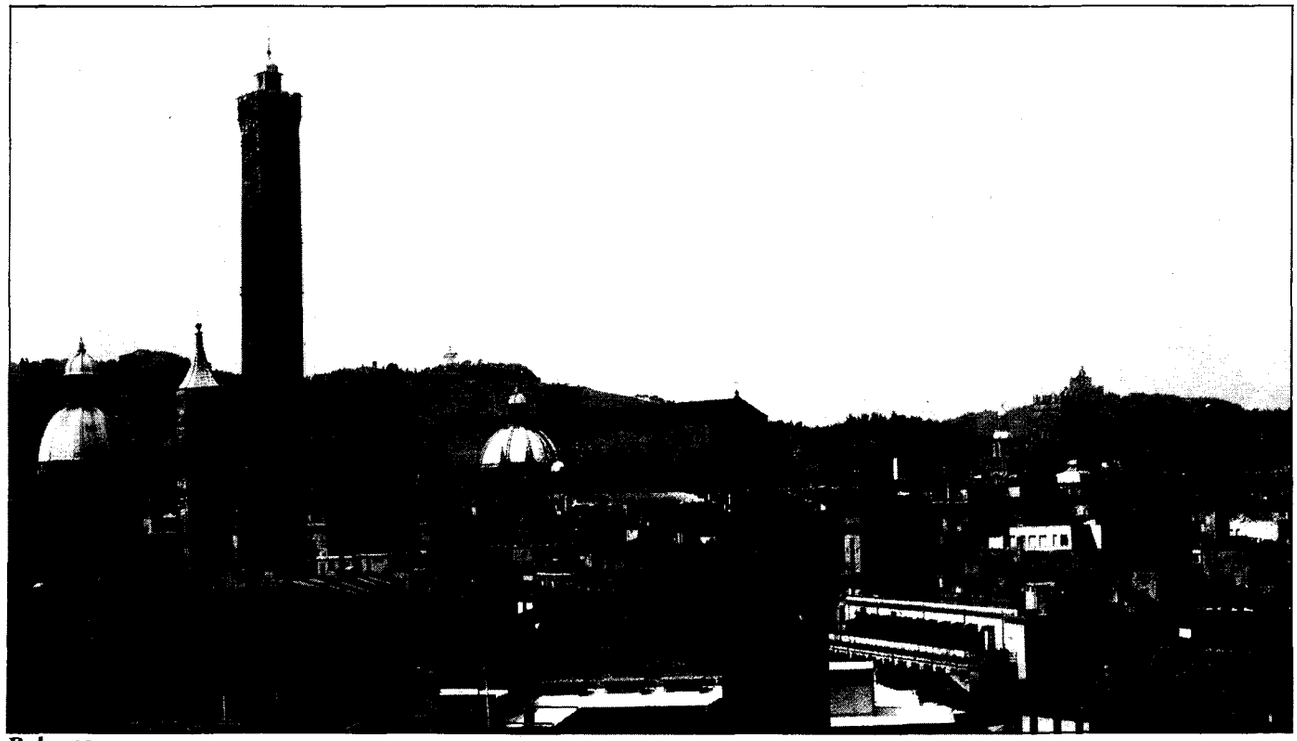

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properly entered the era of modern bourgeois civilisation. It never made that transfer to modernity. It never institutionalised, in a proper sense, the civilisation and structures of advanced capitalism – what Gramsci called 'Fordism'. It never transformed its old industrial and political structures. It never became a second capitalist-industrial-revolution power, in the way that the US did, and, by another route, (the 'Prussian route'), Germany and Japan did. Britain never undertook that deep transformation which, at the end of the 19th century, *remade* both capitalism *and* the working classes. Consequently, Mrs Thatcher knows, as the Left does not, that there is no serious political project in Britain today which is not also about constructing a politics and an image of what *modernity* would be like for our people. And Thatcherism, in its regressive way, drawing on the past, looking backwards to former glories rather than forwards to a new epoch, has inaugurated the project of reactionary modernisation.

'There is no law of history which can predict what must inevitably be the outcome of a political struggle'

There is nothing more crucial, in this respect, than Gramsci's recognition that every crisis is also a moment of reconstruction; that there is no destruction which is not, also, reconstruction; that, historically nothing is dismantled without also attempting to put something new in its place; that every form of power not only excludes but produces something.

That is an entirely new conception of crisis – and of power. When the Left talks about crisis, all we see is capitalism disintegrating, and us marching in and taking over. We don't understand that the disruption of the normal functioning of the old economic, social, cultural order, provides the opportunity to reorganise it in new ways, to restructure and refashion, to modernise and move ahead. If necessary, of course, at the cost of allowing vast numbers of people – in the North East, the North West, in Wales and Scotland, in the mining communities and the devastated industrial heartlands, in the inner cities and elsewhere – to be consigned to the historical dustbin. That is the 'law' of capitalist modernisation: uneven development, organised disorganisation.

Face to face with this dangerous new political formation, the temptation is always, ideologically, to dismantle it, to force it to stand still, by asking *the* classic Marxist question: who does it really represent? Now, usually when the Left asks that old classic Marxist question in the old way, we are not really asking a question, we are making a statement. We already *know* the answer. *Of course*, the Right represents the ruling class in power. It represents the occupancy, by capital, of the state, which is nothing but its instrument. Bourgeois writers produce bourgeois novels. The Conservative Party is the ruling class at prayer. Etc, etc . . . This is Marxism as a theory of the obvious. The question delivers no new knowledge, only the answer we already knew. It's a kind of game – political theory as a Trivial Pursuit. In fact, the reason we need to ask the question is because *we really don't know*.

It really is puzzling to say, in any simple way, whom Thatcherism represents. Here is the perplexing phenomenon of a petty-bourgeois ideology which 'represents,' and is helping to reconstruct, both national and international capital. In the course of 'representing' corporate capital, however, it wins the consent of very substantial sections of the subordinate and dominated classes. What is the nature of this ideology which can inscribe such a vast range of different positions and interests in it, and which seems to represent a little bit of everybody – including most of the people in this room! For, make no mistake, a tiny bit of all of us is also somewhere inside the Thatcherite project. Of course, we're all one hundred per-cent committed. But every now and then – Saturday mornings, perhaps, just before the demonstration – we go to Sainsbury's and we're just a tiny bit of a Thatcherite subject . . .

How do we make sense of an ideology which is not coherent, which speaks now, in one ear, with the voice of, free-wheeling, utilitarian, market-man, and in the other ear, with the voice of respectable, bourgeois, patriarchal man? How do these two repertoires operate together? We are all perplexed by the *contradictory* nature of Thatcherism. In our intellectual way, we think that the world will collapse as the result of a logical contradiction: this is the illusion of the intellectual – that ideology must be coherent, every bit of it fitting together, like a philosophical investigation. When, in fact, the whole purpose of what Gramsci called an organic (i.e, historically-effective) ideology is that it articulates into a configuration, different subjects, different identities, different projects, different aspirations. It does not reflect, it *constructs*, a 'unity' out of difference.

We've been in the grasp of the Thatcherite project, not since 1983 or 1979, as official doctrine has it, but since 1975. 1975 is the climateric in British politics. First of all, the oil hike. Secondly, the onset of the capitalist crisis. Thirdly, the transformation of modern Conservatism by the accession of the Thatcherite leadership. That is the moment of reversal when, as Gramsci argued, national and international factors come together. It doesn't begin with Mrs Thatcher's electoral victory, as politics is not a matter of elections alone. It lands in 1975, right in the middle of Mr Callaghan's political solar plexus. It breaks Mr Callaghan – already a broken reed – in two. One half remains avuncular, paternalist, socially-conservative. The other half dances to a new tune.

One of the siren voices, singing the new song in his ear, is his son-in-law, Peter Jay, one of the architects of monetarism, in his missionary role as economic editor at *The Times*. He first saw the new market forces, the new sovereign consumer, coming over the hill like the marines. And, harkening to these intimations of the future, the old man opens his mouth; and what does he say? The kissing has to stop. The game is over. Social democracy is finished. The welfare state is gone forever. We can't afford it. We've been paying ourselves too much, giving ourselves a lot of phoney jobs, having too much of a swinging time.

You can just see the English psyche collapsing under the weight of the illicit pleasures it has been enjoying – the permissiveness, the consumption, the goodies. It's all false – tinsel and froth. The Arabs have blown it all away. And now we have got to advance in a different way. Mrs Thatcher speaks to this 'new course'. She speaks to something else, deep in the English psyche: its masochism. The need which the English seem to have to be ticked off by Nanny and sent to bed without a pudding. The calculus by which every good summer has to be paid for by twenty bad winters. The Dunkirk Spirit – the worse off we are, the better we behave. She didn't promise us the giveaway society. She said, iron times; back to the wall; stiff upper lip; get moving; get to work; dig in. Stick by the old, tried verities, the wisdom of 'Old England'. The family has kept society together; live by it. Send the women back to the hearth. Get the men out on to the Northwest Frontier. Hard times – followed, much later, by a return to the Good Old Days. She asked you for a long leash – not one, but two and three terms. By the end, she said, I will be able to redefine the nation in such a way that you will all, once again, for the first time, since the Empire started to go down the tube, feel what it is like to be part of Great Britain Unlimited. You will be able, once again, to send our boys 'over there', to fly the flag, to welcome back the fleet. Britain will be Great again.

People don't vote for Thatcherism, in my view, because they believe the small print. People in their right minds do not think that Britain is now a wonderfully booming, successful, economy. Nobody believes that, with 3¾ million people unemployed, the economy is picking up. Everyone knows Lord Young's figures are 'economical with the truth'. What Thatcherism, as an ideology, does, is to address the fears, the anxieties, the lost identities, of a people. It invites us to think about politics in images. It is addressed to our collective fantasies, to Britain as an imagined community, to the social imaginary. Mrs Thatcher has totally dominated that idiom, while the Left forlornly tries to drag the conversation round to 'our policies'.

This is a momentous historical project, the regressive modernisation of Britain. To win over ordinary people to that, not because they're dupes, or stupid, or

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because they are blinded by false consciousness. Since, in fact, the political character of our ideas cannot be guaranteed by our class position or by the 'mode of production', it *is* possible for the Right to construct a politics which does speak to people's experience, which does insert itself into what Gramsci called the necessarily fragmentary, contradictory nature of common sense, which does resonate with some of their ordinary aspirations, and which, in certain circumstances, can recoup them as subordinate subjects, into a historical project which 'hegemonises' what we used – erroneously – to think of as their 'necessary class interests'. Gramsci is one of the first modern Marxists to recognise that interests are not given but have to be politically and ideologically constructed.

Gramsci warns us in the *Notebooks* that a crisis is not an immediate event but a process: it can last for a long time, and can be very differently resolved: by restoration, by reconstruction or by passive transformism. Sometimes more stable, sometimes more unstable; but in a profound sense, British institutions, the British economy, British society and culture have been in a deep social crisis for most of the 20th century.

'For, make no mistake, a tiny bit of all of us is also somewhere inside the Thatcherite project'

Gramsci warns us that organic crises of this order erupt, not only in the political domain and the traditional areas of industrial and economic life, not simply in the class struggle, in the old sense; but in a wide series of polemics, debates about fundamental sexual, moral and intellectual questions, in a crisis in the relations of political representation and the parties – on a whole range of issues which do not necessarily, in the first instance, appear to be articulated with politics, in the narrow sense, at all. That is what Gramsci calls the crisis of authority, which is nothing but 'the crisis of hegemony or general crisis of the state'.

We are exactly in that moment. We have been shaping up to such a 'crisis of authority' in English social life and culture since the mid 60s. In the 60s, the crisis of English society was signalled in a number of debates and struggles around new points of antagonism, which appeared at first to be far removed from the traditional heartland of British politics. The Left often waited patiently for the old rhythms of 'the class struggle' to be resumed, when in fact it was the forms of 'the class struggle' itself which were being transformed. We can only understand this diversification of social struggles in the light of Gramsci's insistence that, in modern societies, hegemony must be constructed, contested and won, on many different sites, as the structures of the modern state and society complexify and the points of social antagonism proliferate.

So one of the most important things that Gramsci has done for us is to give us a *profoundly expanded conception* of what politics itself is like, and thus also of power and authority. We cannot, after Gramsci, go back to the notion of mistaking electoral politics, or party politics in a narrow sense, or even the occupancy of state power, as constituting the ground of modern politics itself. Gramsci understands that politics is a much expanded field; that, especially in societies of our kind, the sites on which power is constituted will be enormously varied. We are living through the proliferation of the sites of power and antagonism in modern society. The transition to this new phase is decisive for Gramsci. It puts directly on the political agenda the questions of moral and intellectual leadership, the educative and formative role of the state, the 'trenches and fortifications' of civil society, the crucial issue of the consent of the masses and the creation of a new type or level of 'civilisation', a new culture. It draws the decisive line between the formula of 'Permanent Revolution' and the 'formula of civil hegemony'. It is the cutting-edge between the 'war of movement' and the 'war of position': the point where Gramsci's world meets ours.

That does not mean, as some people read Gramsci, that therefore the state doesn't matter any more. The state is clearly absolutely central in articulating the different areas of contestation, the different points of antagonism, into a regime of rule. The moment when you can get sufficient power in the state to organise a central political project is decisive, for then you can use the state to plan, urge, incite, solicit and punish, to *conform* the different sites of power and consent into a single regime. That is the moment of 'authoritarian populism' – Thatcherism simultaneously 'above' (in the state) and 'below' (out there with the people).

Even then, Mrs Thatcher does not make the mistake of thinking that the capitalist state has a single and unified political character. She is perfectly well aware, as the Left is not, that, though the capitalist state is articulated to securing the long-term, historical conditions for capital accumulation and profitability, though it is the guardian of a certain kind of bourgeois, patriarchal civilisation and culture, that it is, and continues to be, an arena of contestation.

Does this mean that Thatcherism is, after all, simply the 'expression' of the ruling class? Of course Gramsci always gives a central place to the questions of class, class alliances, class struggle. Where Gramsci departs from classical versions of Marxism is that he does not think that politics is an arena which simply *reflects* already unified collective political identities, already constituted forms of struggle. Politics for him is not a dependent sphere. It is where forces and relations, in the economy, in society, in culture, have to be actively *worked on* to produce particular forms of power, forms of domination. This is the production of politics – politics as a production. This conception of politics is fundamentally contingent, fundamentally open ended. There is no law of history which can predict what must inevitably be the outcome of a political struggle. Politics depends on the relations of forces at any particular moment. History is not waiting in the wings to catch up your mistakes into another 'inevitable success'. You lose because you lose because you lose.

The 'good sense' of the people exists, but it is just the beginning, not the end, of politics. It doesn't *guarantee* anything. Actually, he said, 'new conceptions have an extremely unstable position among the popular masses'. There is no unitary subject of history. The subject is necessarily divided – an ensemble: one half Stone Age, the other containing 'principles of advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history, intuitions of a future philosophy'. Both of those things struggle inside the heads and hearts of 'the people' to find a way of articulating themselves politically. Of course, it is possible to recruit them to very different political projects.

Especially today, we live in an era when the old political identities are collapsing. We cannot imagine socialism coming about any longer through the image of that single, singular subject we used to call Socialist Man. Socialist Man, with one mind, one set of interests, one project, is dead. And good riddance. Who needs 'him' now, with his investment in a particular historical period, with 'his' particular sense of masculinity, shoring 'his' identity up in a particular set of familial relations, a particular kind of sexual identity? Who needs 'him' as the singular identity through which the great diversity of human beings and ethnic cultures in our world *must* enter the 21st century? This 'he' is dead: finished.

Gramsci looked at a world which was complexifying in front of his eyes. He saw the pluralisation of modern cultural identities, emerging between the lines of uneven historical development, and asked the question: what are the political forms through which a new cultural order could be constructed, out of this 'multiplicity of dispersed wills, these heterogeneous aims'? Given that that is what people are really like, given that there is no law that will make socialism come true, can we find forms of organisation, forms of identity, forms of allegiance, social conceptions, which can both connect with popular life and, in the same moment, transform and renovate it? Socialism will not be delivered to us through the trapdoor of history by some *deus ex machina*.

Gramsci always insisted that hegemony is *not* exclusively an ideological phenomenom. There can be no hegemony without 'the decisive nucleus of the economic'. On the other hand, do not fall into the trap of the old mechanical economism and believe that, if you can only get hold of the economy, you can move the rest of life. The nature of power in the modern world is that it is *also* constructed in relation to political,

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moral, intellectual, cultural, ideological, sexual questions. The question of hegemony is always the question of a new cultural order. The question which faced Gramsci in relation to Italy faces us now in relation to Britain: what *is* the nature of this new civilisation? Hegemony is not a state of grace which is installed forever. It's not a formation which incorporates everybody. The notion of a 'historical bloc' is *precisely different* from that of a pacified, homogenous, ruling class.

It entails a quite different conception of how social forces and movements, in their diversity, can be articulated into a set of strategic alliances. To construct a new cultural order, you need not to reflect on already-formed collective will, but to fashion a new one, to inaugurate a new historic project.

I've been talking about Gramsci in the light of, in the aftermath of, Thatcherism: using Gramsci to comprehend the nature and depth of the challenge to the Left which Thatcherism and the new Right represents in English life and politics. But I have, at the same moment, inevitably also been talking about the Left. Or rather, I've *not* been talking about the Left, because the Left, in its organised, labourist form, does not seem to have the slightest conception of what putting together a new historical project entails. It does not understand the necessarily contradictory nature of human subjects, of social identities. It does not understand politics as a production. It does not see that it is possible to connect with the ordinary feelings and experiences which people have in their everyday lives, and yet to articulate them progressively to a more advanced, modern form of social consciousness. It is not actively looking for and working upon the enormous diversity of social forces in our society. It doesn't see that it is in the very nature of modern capitalist civilisation to proliferate the centres of power, and thus to draw more and more areas of life into social antagonism. It does not recognise that the identities which people carry in their heads – their subjectivities, their cultural life, their sexual life, their family life, their ethnic identities, their health – have become massively *politicised*.

I simply don't think, for example, that the current Labour leadership understands that its political fate depends on whether or not it can construct a politics, in the next 20 years, which is able to address itself, not to one, but to a diversity of different points of antagonism in society; unifying them, in their differences, within a common project. I don't think they have grasped that Labour's capacity to grow as a political force depends absolutely on its capacity to draw from the popular energies of very different movements; movements *outside* the party which it did not – could not – set in play, and which it cannot therefore 'administer'. It retains an entirely bureaucratic conception of politics. If the word doesn't proceed out of the mouths of the Labour leadership, there must be something subversive about it. If politics energises people to develop new demands, that is a sure sign that the natives are getting restless. You must expel or depose a few. You must get back to that fiction, the 'traditional Labour voter': to that pacified, Fabian notion of politics, where the masses hijack the experts into power, and then the experts do something for the masses: later . . . much later. The hydraulic conception of politics.

That bureaucratic conception of politics has nothing to do with the mobilisation of a variety of popular forces. It doesn't have any conception of how people become empowered by doing something: first of all about their immediate troubles; then, the power expands their political capacities and ambitions, so that they begin to think again about what it might be like to rule the world . . . Their politics has ceased to have a connection with this most modern of all resolutions – the deepening of democratic life.

Without the deepening of popular participation in national-cultural life, ordinary people don't have any experience of actually running anything. We need to re-acquire the notion that politics is about expanding popular capacities, the capacities of ordinary people. And in order to do so, socialism itself has to speak to the people whom it wants to empower, in words that belong to them as late 20th century ordinary folks.

You'll have noticed that I'm not talking about whether the Labour Party has got its policy on this or that issue right. I'm talking about a whole conception of politics: the capacity to grasp in our political imagination the huge historical choices in front of the British people, today. I'm talking about new conceptions of the nation itself: whether you believe Britain can advance into the next century with a conception of what it is like to be 'English' which has been entirely constituted out of Britain's long, disastrous imperialist march across the earth. If you really think that, you haven't grasped the profound cultural transformation required to *remake* the English. That kind of cultural transformation is precisely what socialism is about today.

Now a political party of the Left, however much it is centred on government, on winning elections, has, in my view, exactly this kind of decision before it. The reason why I'm not optimistic about the 'mass party of the working class' ever understanding the nature of the historical choice confronting it is precisely because I suspect Labour does secretly still believe that there's a little bit of lee-way left in the old, economic-corporate, incremental, Keynesian game. It does think it could go back to a little smidgeon of Keynesianism here, a little bit more of the welfare state there, a little bit of the old Fabian thing . . . Actually, though I don't have a cataclysmic vision of the future, I honestly believe that that option is now closed. It's exhausted. Nobody believes in it any more. Its material conditions have disappeared. The ordinary British people won't vote for it because they know in their bones life is not like that any more.

'In front of us is the historic choice: capitulate to the Thatcherite future, or find another way of imagining'

What Thatcherism, in its radical way, poses is not what we can go back to but along which route are we to go forward? In front of us is the historic choice: capitulate to the Thatcherite future, or find another way of imagining. Don't worry about Mrs Thatcher herself; she will retire to Dulwich. But there are lots more third, fourth and fifth generation Thatcherites, dry as dust, sound to a man, waiting to take her place. They feel themselves now on the crest of a wave. They are at the forefront of what they think is the new global expansion of capitalism. They are convinced that this will obliterate socialism forever. They think we are dinosaurs. They think we belong to another era. They think meetings like this are a kind of wake. As socialism slowly declines, a new era will dawn and these new kinds of possessive men will be in charge of it. They dream about real cultural power. And Labour, in its softly-softly, don't-rock-the-boat, hoping-the-election-polls-will-go-up, way, actually has in front of it only the choice between becoming historically irrelevant or beginning to sketch out an entirely new form of civilisation.

I don't say socialism, lest the word is so familiar to you that you think I mean just putting the same old programme we all know about back on the rails. I am talking about a renewal of the whole socialist project in the context of modern social and cultural life. I mean shifting the relations of forces – not so that Utopia comes the day after the next general election, but so that the *tendencies* begin to run another way. Who needs a socialist Heaven where everybody agrees with everybody else, where everybody's exactly the same? God forbid. I mean a place where we can begin the historic quarrel about what a new kind of civilisation must be. That's what it's about. Is it possible that the immense new material, cultural and technological capacities, which far outstrip Marx's wildest dreams, which are now actually in our hands, are going to be politically hegemonised for the reactionary modernisation of Thatcherism? Or can we seize on those means of history-making, of making new human subjects, and shove it in the direction of a new culture? That's the choice before the Left.

'One should stress', Gramsci wrote, 'the significance which, in the modern world, political parties have in the elaboration and diffusion of conceptions of the world, because essentially what they do is to work out the ethics and the politics corresponding to these conceptions and act as it were as their historical 'laboratory' . . .' ●

This article is based on a talk given at *Marxism Today*'s Gramsci '87 event

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Mike Abrahams/Network

Frank Spooner Pictures

Mrs Thatcher: Her 'Iron Lady' image displays her as having more guts for a desperate political gamble than any wimpy man

Thatcher Uses Her Woman's Touch

The prime minister's qualities as housewife, refined lady and warrior queen have been critical to the success of Thatcherism, argues **Ros Brunt**

Margaret Thatcher – such a familiar, seemingly permanent figure on the political landscape. So hard to recall now just what an extensive shock-wave her rise to power first caused: she appeared to come 'from nowhere' and, most devastatingly, she was a woman. The Tories were abashed at what they had done – knocked out their first democratically-elected upstart, 'Grocer Heath', only to replace him with 'the grocer's daughter'. But the reverberations were muted by Tory good form and the familiar closing of ranks, diffused by displays of gallantry or camp delight that the new Leaderene would mock any Labourist aspirations towards equal opportunities.

Much of the Left, however, felt no such inhibitions about its misogyny, and was immediately on the lookout for scapegoats to blame for Thatcher's sudden accession. For otherwise 'progressive' men, it appeared as yet another instance of a Pandora's Box opened too hastily by the women's liberation movement. Woman-hating combined with woman-blaming as the supreme 'irony' of Thatcher was repeatedly and ponderously explained to socialist feminists. 'See what you've done now! Look where all this can lead!' The triumph of Thatcherism represented the threat of a feminism gone completely out of (men's) control. While leftist men got the point that Thatcher herself was hardly the apogee of feminism, they still had a gut fear of what a woman in power might mean – as expressed in the slogan 'Ditch the Bitch'. Labour Party stalwarts appeared baffled when asked to stop reproducing the phrase: could it be that socialist women weren't *that* opposed to Thatcher after all?

Since the late 70s, men on the Left have cleaned up their anti-Thatcher act. Today's more astute response combines total opposition to Thatcherite politics with an awed admiration for Thatcher herself as an authoritative 'conviction' politician. As the best-known anti-sexist politician, Ken Livingstone, says, 'I have a lot of respect for her. She believes in things and she has fought for them.'

The new respect for Thatcher's leadership is an undeniable advance on, say, Denis Healey's continued lumbering innuendo about her intimacy with world leaders. But by concentrating exclusively on her politics, it actually denies the extent to which Thatcherism relies on what Thatcher represents *as a woman*. I want to argue two apparently contradictory things: that Thatcher's politics have absolutely nothing to do with women, women's politics or the feminist movement, but that they have everything to do with Thatcher being a woman in politics.

In the first place, because some versions of the Pandora's Box theme are still current, implying that the content and

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style of Thatcherism represent what the world would look like if ever women, or Women's Libbers, 'took over', it is worth stressing just how much Thatcher as politician is the creation of particular men and how the politics of Thatcherism are bounded by patriarchal values.

Thatcher's political career has been entirely constructed by men, both ideologically and materially. The biography begins with the baseline philosophy and fatherly encouragement of Alderman Alfred Roberts. It includes the crucially advantageous marriage to Denis Thatcher, which, since 1951, has provided emotional support, the ideological cover for normal wifedom and natural motherhood, and the wherewithal to buy freedom from childcare with nanny help and boarding school. The marriage also subsidised the legal career that contributed to Thatcher's successful entry into Parliament in 1959 and oiled the political wheels thereafter – as she says, 'it is expensive to be in politics, one has to be so mobile, one has to be well-groomed, and one has to entertain'. Then there is the bid for the Tory leadership under the patronage of Edward du Cann and Sir Keith Joseph, masterminded by Airey Neave, the most experienced conspirator of the Right. And there is the prime ministerial image-building by Gordon Reece, subsequently knighted for his services to hairstyles, fashion and voice modulation. The whole process acknowledges no womanly influence, no maternal advice, no girls' get-together – or certainly not as Thatcher herself tells it.

There is also a studious avoidance of the 'pitfalls' of any identification with 'women's issues'. Thatcher's background in the male-dominated areas of industrial chemistry and tax law gave her the political dispensation to specialise in Treasury-type areas while in opposition and be 'spokesman' on matters like 'energy' and 'housing' before becoming responsible for education.

This political trajectory indicates the extent to which Thatcher has always been the 'loner', the extraordinary and unique woman operating in a man's world. Such isolation from other women is of course still a structural 'given' for most 'top women', but it has been accentuated by Thatcher's personal choice. It has also been strengthened by the way she has deliberately rejected any identification with existing models of the Tory woman politician.

There are two types of women who have traditionally 'made it' in Tory politics and who, unlike Thatcher, have usually attempted at least to address women's issues – particularly if they've had a grounding in local politics, which she managed to avoid. First, there is the tradition best exemplified by the long-serving Birmingham MP, Jill Knight, which draws on reactionary populist religion, appeals to petit-bourgeois anxieties and women's fears about male violence and takes up issues like pornography, football hooliganism, and the restoration of capital punishment. Then there is a more flamboyant type of Tory woman who shares a similar perspective on 'women as the repositories and guardians of moral values' while explicitly despising any narrow-minded 'provincialism', delights in the company of men and enjoys conspicuous consumption. But the latter woman also recognises that there's a price to pay for pleasure and privilege and so combines a flair for narcissistic publicity with aristocratic and enlightened Christian beliefs about dedication to the service of often unpopular causes. This is a tradition of progressive Toryism, well exemplified by the novelist Barbara Cartland's campaigns for improved maternity grants and midwifery services and permanent sites for travellers, which lost her a council seat; and by her daughter Raine's attacks on public hygiene standards as the renta-quote Lady Lewisham of the 1950s and later, as Countess of Dartmouth, supporter of the Covent Garden community battle against the property speculators and other GLC Tories.

Most women Tory politicians present some amalgam of these two campaigning models. Thatcher owes nothing to either, although her voting record and her support for so-called Victorian values align her closer to the Jill Knight position. But in so far as both these positions relate to a recognisable 'women's politics', they form no reference point for Thatcherism. As a politician, Thatcher has never made any claim to 'represent' women or speak in any way on their behalf. Nor indeed has she ever done anything for women, apart from make the majority much more hard up. All her 12 years at the top only serve to confirm what *Spare Rib* said in a 1975 editorial: Margaret Thatcher is not a sister. Furthermore she is not even a sister 'under the skin' in the way socialist feminists have more recently argued that, in particular circumstances, we might regard those other types of Tory woman politician. Nor can she be regarded as the outcome of the feminist movement. She set out to make it in a man's world and was never interested in even negotiating the terms of patriarchy.

At the same time, everything about her politics is related to gender, is inseparable from images of femininity existing in competition and conflict with versions of masculinity. Indeed, Thatcher's success in the realm of patriarchal politics is precisely to do with her effectiveness as a woman and the way she inhabits particular feminine roles while appearing to disavow femininity.

Now that Thatcherism looks so powerful, it requires some effort of political memory to recall just what a risky strategy it appeared to be in 1979 and the extent of the forces ranged against it in Thatcher's first cabinet. Because of the subsequent distance between Heath and Thatcher, it is now forgotten that Thatcherism was once Heath's project too, but it ran aground amid U-turns and the three-day week. Thatcher thought that Heath's original policy of free enterprise hammered out at Selsdon Park was right. His mistake was simply lack of the guts needed to fight it out at all costs. He had stopped being Selsdon Man, but 'I was still Selsdon Woman', she said in 1975[1].

But when the chance came to put Selsdon Woman into operation, she had ranged against her a heavy battery of conventional political wisdom and the Heathite alliance which, quite simply, feared that to go down that road again, with its inevitable social divisiveness and mass unemployment, would be electoral harikiri. How could the Tory party ever offer itself again as the embodiment of the nation united?

From this position, Margaret Thatcher not only managed to 'carry off' Thatcherism, but also to see off all subsequent challenges in a way that made her 'invincible', and, despite every indication to the contrary, still the Defender of One Britain, indeed the personification of Britannia. Her way of doing it, I think, is deeply implicated in the politics of gender.

For a start, the collapse of internal Tory opposition to Thatcherism was also about 'impotence', a failure of the familiar strategies of smoothy upper-class masculinity when confronted with a lone woman operator needing to establish her cabinet authority. The popular term Tory 'wet' sums up the way Thatcher managed to convey to the public that opposition to her was both politically and sexually inept. These men could not even stand up to a woman. 'Are they one of us?' is the first question Thatcher asks of any political challenger. According to her own gendered terminology, the wets are not 'us', simply because she could brand them all as 'old women'. In turn, she became known to her colleagues as 'the best man in the cabinet', and masculine attributes were grafted on to her femininity in ways that made her doubly superior. The soviet epithet 'Iron Lady', and her own slogan, 'The Lady's Not For Turning', displayed her as a woman with more guts for a desperate political gamble than any wimpy man.

Misogyny apart, the 'best man in the cabinet' tag also ignores the likelihood that if the prime minister *had* been a man, Thatcherism might well not have triumphed. For the 'wets' literally spoke a different language from Thatcher. Theirs were the conventions of irony, nuance and understatement, the famous 'coded' remarks of those accustomed to rule without raising their voices. By contrast, Thatcher was confrontationally direct, monolithically

'She set out to make it in a man's world and was never interested in even negotiating the terms of patriarchy'

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straight-talking. The wets were simply outmanoeuvred by the sort of woman they had no experience of 'handling' and knew they could not hit.

If Tory gallantry and the continued blessing of a divided opposition combined to disperse the challenges to Thatcherite policy, what has sustained the success of Thatcherism has undoubtedly been its identification with Thatcher's own persona as a woman . It has been crucial for her politics that she could draw on family 'cover' to compensate for the near-disaster of her earlier incarnation as 'milk snatcher'. She has never entirely overcome the previous impression of 'unnatural woman, depriver of innocent children'; and the caring-and-nurturing aspect of wife and mother has never been that convincing to the electorate despite maternal anxiety over Mark. The success of her family status owes more to the public image of Denis Thatcher. His persona has made it a recognisable sort of marriage where the wife is clearly The Boss; but she can't be all bad if such a transparently easy-going and decent old cove as her husband continues to support her.

To this extent it hasn't even mattered that Thatcher's femininity isn't particularly *likable*, nor that she has lost out in both the family and good breeding stakes to the Queen. The point is that the sort of woman she speaks as is instantly familiar and understandable. You know where you are with Margaret Thatcher: she makes it perfectly plain and obvious and what she has to say is based in identifiable everyday experience. Pre-eminently it is the language of 'making the best of yourself' and 'making do'. It belongs to the realm of the housewife, of putting the best face on it, of perfect grooming, smart but practical, of care with the household budget.

The famous Thatcher comparisons of domestic and national economies are, at an analytical level, clearly ridiculous and unreal when most households run on extended credit and unpaid bills. But at another level, what she says is so obvious it almost appears to go without saying. For it appeals to the most atavistic commonsense: 'My policies are based not on some economic theory but on the things I and millions like me were brought up with. An honest day's pay; live within your means; put by a nest egg for a rainy day; pay your bills on time; support the police.' The very banality of Thatcher's sayings formulates some kind of basic aspiration for the nation: if only we could all 'return' to a world that was that simple, that unified.

Thatcher's rhetoric is that of the housewife who is also Britannia. It speaks for a political strategy which a new class of Tory men has devised but which it has taken one Tory woman to implement successfully. Heath didn't bring it off, Joseph passed up the opportunity and I doubt if Tebbit would make it. Their problem is that they give the game away in every sense. In their mouths and through their personas, the self-same politics that Thatcher espouses is much more clearly revealed for the savage class warfare it really is. I would suggest that the effectiveness of Thatcher's femininity is the degree to which it serves as cover for what would otherwise be transparent Heathism, or its ultimate extension, 'naked Tebbitry', where the full extent of the present government's devastating sleaziness and mean-minded corruption would be amply displayed. Is it only the fact of the prime minister being a woman with the overdetermined attributes of ordinary housewife, refined lady and warrior-queen, that prevents that point being crystal clear in the election?

'If the prime minister had been a man, Thatcherism might well not have triumphed'

The one positive aspect of Thatcher's femininity is that she has made political leadership by women thinkable. And at least she hasn't 'blown it' for women. On the contrary, she has coped extremely effectively with the demands of the job; indeed, she has positively radiated a self-confident ability to perform well. At the same time, the political strategy she represents is so unacceptable in its social and economic consequences, that it literally 'takes a woman' to front it successfully. ●

1. 'For a very readable summary of this period, see John Cole's *The Thatcher Years*, BBC Books, 1987.

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The Gorbachev Offensive

The Soviet leader is consolidating his power to strengthen his drive for reform. **Archie Brown** considers his chances of success

Western publics were not very well prepared by their mass media for the changes which began to take place in the Soviet Union under the General Secretaryship of Yuri Andropov and which – following the Chernenko interregnum – are being carried much further under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. Disproportionate attention was focused on the health and person of the top leader. While the subject of the succession to Leonid Brezhnev was a very important one, Brezhnev merely had to disappear from public view for a week or more (as he often did in his later years) for massive attention to be concentrated on his life expectancy and the possible identity of the next General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

That even under the conservative Brezhnev there were different political tendencies within the Soviet Communist Party – in broad terms (though many further distinctions can be made) reformist, conservative and neo-Stalinist – went largely unnoticed. A vast amount of attention was, of course, paid in the mass media to overt dissent, and the average Western newspaper reader or television viewer could have been forgiven for picking up an exaggerated idea of the dissidents' salience within Soviet political life and for coming to the conclusion that apart from them the Soviet Union consisted entirely of like-minded conformists.

Yet those Brezhnev years also saw debate, much of it esoteric, conducted in Soviet specialist journals and books. Many of the people who stayed within the boundaries of the system were far from satisfied with the status quo. Some criticised it from a neo-Stalinist or a Russian nationalist standpoint; others (and it is they who are coming to the fore today) as advocates of economic and political reform. Those who wished to exercise influence and avoid the marginalisation which became the fate of most Soviet dissidents (for the political context in the Soviet Union was very different from that of Poland where a great part of the nation were 'dissidents') abided by certain rules.

Thus, for many economic reformers this meant praising the Hungarian economic reform rather than directly advocating a significant role for markets within the Soviet economy (especially after Kosygin's attempted reform, which was launched in 1965 and which made some nods in the direction of the market, petered out in the face of conservative opposition, of which Brezhnev was a part). Similarly, the rules of the game involved (and still involve) emphasising the need for development of the 'democratic' component of 'democratic centralism' rather than making a frontal attack on that latter concept. They likewise entailed – and accommodated – advocating the recognition of the existence of different interests in Soviet society and the idea of 'diversity within monism' rather than embracing the notion of political pluralism which (especially following the 'Prague Spring') remained firmly taboo.

Without such efforts by within-system reformers, people who tried to push further the limits of the possible and broaden the political space within them (rather than attempt to destroy such boundaries totally and destroy themselves politically in the process), there would be no changes of the kind which are under way in the Soviet Union today. The reform-minded wings of the party apparatus and of the party intelligentsia were an important part of the coalition which supported Gorbachev when he overcame considerable conservative opposition to attain the General Secretaryship. Today they are the most enthusiastic element in the coalition which bolsters his power.

There were also, of course, 'objective factors' which led to the policy innovation which we are now seeing. These included a secular decline in the rate of economic growth from the 1950s to the early 1980s, a growing technological gap in many sectors of the economy between the Soviet Union and the most successful capitalist countries and growing international tension (with the associated burden and insecurity imposed by the spiralling military competition between the Soviet Union and the United States). But though Gorbachev appeared to some Western observers (myself included) to be both a reformer and a very likely future General Secretary some years already before he got that job, it would be a mistake to think that there was an inevitability about his coming to office and to the acceptance of the policies which are now being pursued. When I asked a Soviet jurist in Moscow in October 1984 whether the very seriousness of the economic and political problems would not lead to the adoption of many of the policies which we see now (and with Gorbachev implementing them as the most likely successor to the already physically failing Chernenko), he replied: 'Yes, either that or the complete opposite!'

It was clear that something new had to be tried. The quasi-corporatism of the Brezhnev era – a style of rule which produced a lowest common denominator of agreement within the elite – would no longer work. The Soviet Union could not afford to try to 'muddle through' the remaining years of the 1980s and the 1990s in the way in which it had, in domestic affairs, muddled through the 1970s, for it was becoming increasingly evident that this would mean, as Seweryn Bialer put it, 'a process of "muddling down"'.[1]

There remained, however, reactionary as well as reformist alternatives. The person within the top leadership team who could have personified the former tendency was Grigori Romanov, the former Leningrad regional party leader who by this time supervised the military and military industry within the Central Committee Secretariat. Like Gorbachev, he was a senior secretary (a full member of the Politburo and a secretary of the Central Committee) at the time of Chernenko's death. Romanov did not control nearly as much of the apparatus or have as many friends as Gorbachev, and so he supported instead the elevation of another 'interim leader', the distinctly conservative 70-year-old Moscow party chief, Viktor Grishin, under whom the balance of power within the Secretariat could have been tilted in favour of Romanov and against Gorbachev.[2]

That Gorbachev was a far more skilful as well as a more appealing politician than Romanov and Grishin put together was a fact of no small importance. For

1. Seweryn Bialer, *Stalin's Successors: Leadership, Stability and Change in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980), p. 305.
2. Rather remarkably, an article by the Soviet author, Mikhail Shatrov, in the journal *Ogonek* (No. 4, 1987, p. 5) recently confirmed that there had indeed been an attempt to secure the General Secretaryship for Grishin and put a stop to the rise of Gorbachev.

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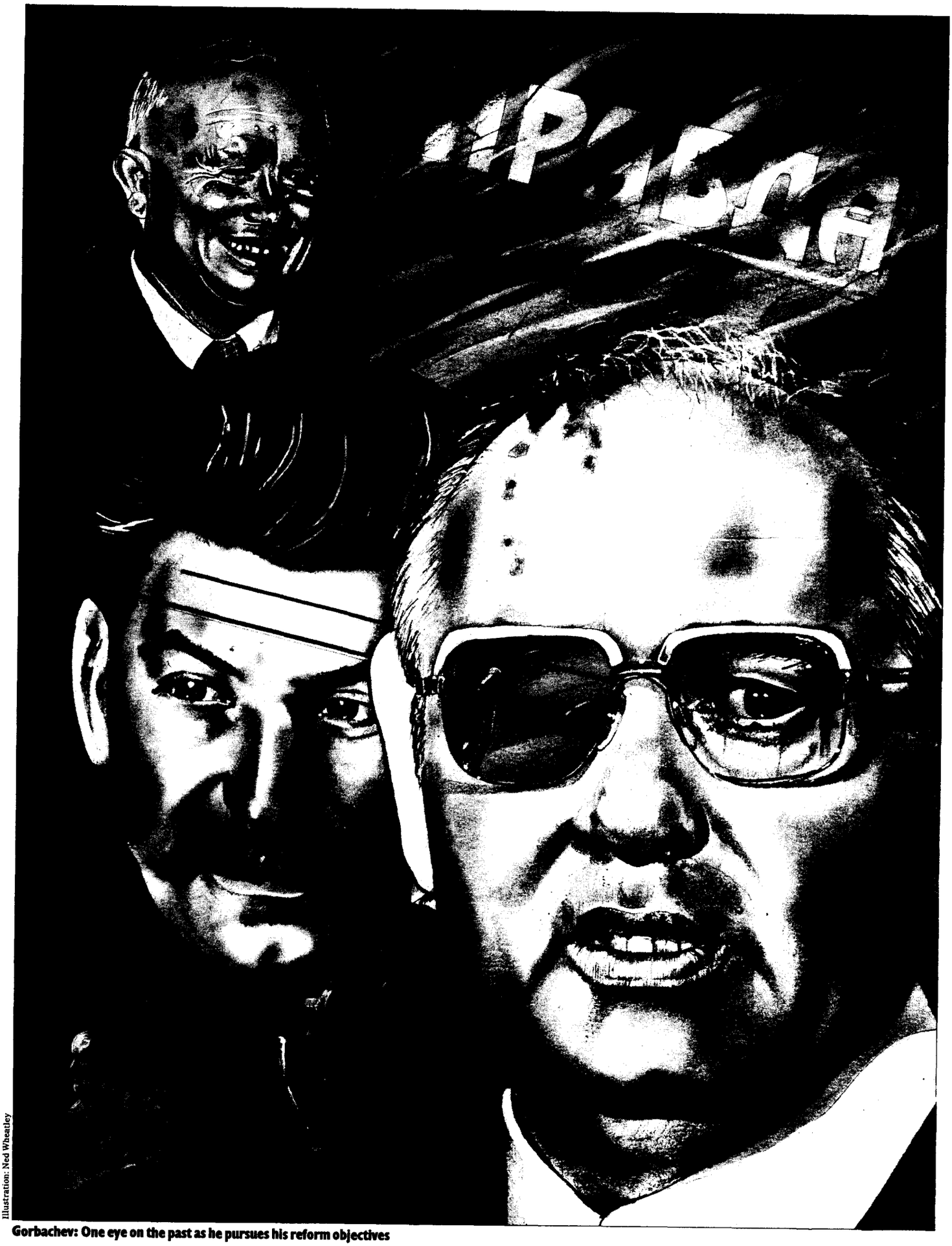

Illustration: Ned Wheatley

Gorbachev: One eye on the past as he pursues his reform objectives

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if it be true that the changes of the last two years could not have occurred without an influential group of party members who not only support *but are pushing for* reform, it is equally clear that the Soviet system is one in which great power is vested in the office of General Secretary. Contrary to Western misconceptions and old-style Soviet propaganda, the party is *not* monolithically united. It contains people of very different ideas and personality types and embraces very distinctive opinion groupings and institutional interests.

It is of prime importance that a new General Secretary can change the correlation of forces – or balance of influence – among the competing tendencies and various informal groups. This is precisely what has happened under Gorbachev.

'Something new had to be tried. The quasi-corporatism of the Brezhnev era would no longer work'

Gorbachev has achieved more personnel change in high places in his first two years than was achieved so soon by any other General Secretary in the Soviet Union's 70-year history. This was facilitated by the fact that Brezhnev had allowed the entire political elite to grow old together, and though a start to rejuvenation was made under Andropov (and slowed down under Chernenko), the process still had a long way to go. It would be an oversimplification to see all the new senior appointees as people whose ties are closer to Gorbachev than to any of his colleagues. Other senior members of the Politburo, such as the *de facto* second secretary of the party, Egor Ligachev, and the chairman of the Council of Ministers, Nikolai Ryzhkov, have been successful in co-opting a number of their former colleagues and subordinates. But Ligachev and Ryzhkov are themselves part of the new top leadership team, men who were first brought into it under Andropov and who have risen still higher in the Gorbachev era. They are neither opponents nor clients of Gorbachev, but, rather, conditional allies.

Taken as a whole, the changes have been sufficiently sweeping as to greatly facilitate policy innovation. In some ways Gorbachev was fortunate in that a party congress (held every five years) was due within a year of Chernenko's death. This provided both a particularly authoritative platform for the enunciation of new policies and an opportunity to change the composition of the Central Committee. Against that, it is worth noting that Gorbachev has continued to strengthen his position in the meantime and a number of the new appointments to party and state offices in his second year are those which, when a party congress comes along, carry Central Committee membership virtually automatically.

Thus a Central Committee elected now would mean the departure of more survivors of the Brezhnev era than actually left the political scene at the party congress in early 1986. Even so, the Central Committee membership turnover was greater at that 27th congress than at any congress since Khrushchev's last – the 22nd congress of 1961. Whereas 87% of surviving full members of the Central Committee elected at the 25th congress in 1976 were reelected in 1981, only 59% of those elected at the 26th congress in that year were reelected in 1986.

It is within the inner bodies of the Central Committee – the top leadership team who compose the full and candidate membership of the Politburo or belong to the Secretariat of the Central Committee – that the personnel change has been greatest. Gorbachev's main power base lies within the Secretariat, a body which in practice wields only slightly less power than the Politburo itself. Here the change has been dramatic. Of 12 Secretaries of the Central Committee, nine have been appointed to their posts since Gorbachev took over.

They include several key people who are particularly close to Gorbachev – among them, Aleksandr Yakovlev who oversees culture and propaganda within the Secretariat, who has been a strong proponent of the policy of greater openness *(glasnost)* and who in January 1987 added candidate membership of the Politburo to his secretaryship; Georgi Razumovsky who has a background in agriculture, career links to Gorbachev and is in charge of the extremely important Central Committee department responsible for placement of party cadres; and most recently (in January of this year) Anatoli Luk'yanov who overlapped with Gorbachev in the Law Faculty of Moscow University in the early 1950s and who had been heading since 1985 the General Department of the Central Committee through which papers pass to the Politburo – as such, he was the nearest functional equivalent in the Soviet system of the Secretary of the Cabinet in Britain.

There is only one woman in the top leadership team, but that is one more than was there throughout the Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko periods. Aleksandra Biryukova was promoted in March 1986 from the secretariat of the Soviet trade unions to the vastly more important position of a Secretary of the Central Committee. Gorbachev has criticised the slow promotion of women within the party ranks and there is no reason to doubt that he was responsible for this particular appointment.

Neither quantitatively nor 'qualitatively' is Gorbachev's position quite so strong in the Politburo as it is in the Secretariat. Whereas in the latter body, not only are three-quarters of the members new, a majority of them would appear also to be people of similar outlook to his own. Among full members of the Politburo, the turnover has been substantial – of the 11, five have received this promotion under Gorbachev – but less sweeping than the turnover in the Secretariat. What is more, among them all, only the Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, looks as if he would go as far down the road of reform as Gorbachev himself is prepared to contemplate. Among the candidate members of the Politburo, Gorbachev's position is stronger. Here, as in the Secretariat, the turnover has been 75%. Of the eight candidate members at present (March 1987), only two were in that position when Gorbachev took over from Chernenko.

Only full members of the Politburo may vote but, as in the British Cabinet, votes are the exception rather than the rule. The candidate members of the Politburo and the Secretaries of the Central Committee attend Politburo meetings as of right and may speak. Hence, these 25 people constitute in a very real sense the top leadership team whose collective support the General Secretary needs, even though his political resources exceed those of any other individual among them and though his 'power to persuade' them is, on several counts, impressive.[3]

The reform wing of that top leadership team, on which Gorbachev himself should certainly be placed, will, however, be significantly strengthened when two or three more people from the ranks of the Secretariat or from the candidate membership of the Politburo who share Gorbachev's political orientation can be promoted to full Politburo membership. Though the Central Committee nominally elects these members, the process is, in essence, one of collective co-option by the Politburo itself. Within it, the General Secretary's voice counts for more than anyone else's but his colleagues (with historical precedents in mind) are usually anxious to maintain checks upon his power. Though such sentiments can be understood, the cause of reform would undoubtedly be furthered by the elevation from candidate to full membership of Aleksandr Yakovlev and of the outspoken First Secretary of the Moscow party organisation, Boris El'tsin.

The choice of Gorbachev as General Secretary (and the further changes in the composition of vital party and state institutions which followed) has also changed the correlation of forces among party influentials. Thus, people who already were known reformers and party members of some significance in Brezhnev's time, have come to enjoy substantially *higher* standing and to advocate more directly the economic reform and 'democratisation' of the Soviet system which they proposed in more cautious language in the 1970s or early 1980s. Many examples of such people could be cited, but for the sake of brevity four may suffice: Abel Aganbegyan, Tat'yana Zaslavskaya, Georgi Shakhnazarov and Fedor Burlatsky.

Aganbegyan, an economic reformer of long standing, spent almost 20 years as director of the Institute of Economics and Organisation of Industrial Produc-

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tion of the Siberian Section of the Academy of Sciences, but was brought to Moscow to play a more central role in the elaboration of economic reform soon after Gorbachev became General Secretary.

His colleague in Novosibirsk, Zaslavskaya, produced for a high-level Moscow seminar in 1983 an analysis of economic and social problems – and of the obstacles to reform – too devastating to be published in full in the Soviet Union at that time, though it subsequently appeared abroad. Now, however, one can see strong echoes of her analysis in the speeches of Gorbachev and she herself has achieved a greater prominence than ever before for her views as one of the boldest reformers. She has had access not only to the party's main theoretical journal, *Kommunist*, but also more recently to the pages of *Pravda* where she made a swingeing attack on the concealment of information from social scientists and compared the level of Soviet sociology unfavourably with that of Poland and Hungary, 'not to mention the developed capitalist countries'.[4]

Shakhnazarov, an innovative Soviet theorist both on international relations and on 'socialist democracy' who combines his academic role with a responsible job in the Central Committee apparatus, has been promoted from being one of a number of deputy heads of the Socialist Countries department of the Central Committee to the important post of First Deputy Head.

Burlatsky, a bold reformer and man of broad-ranging talents who already in Khrushchev's time advocated competitive elections for deputies to soviets and within months of Khrushchev's fall became the first advocate of a separate discipline of political science in the Soviet Union, has achieved a greater prominence than he enjoyed even under Khrushchev[5] with plays on the Soviet stage and on television, a regular political column in the Writers' Union weekly newspaper (which he was first granted during Andropov's General Secretaryship) and a place in the Soviet entourage which accompanied Gorbachev to the Geneva and Reykjavik 'summits'.

Both within the higher ranks of the party apparatus and outside it, the people who have now come to the fore include far more with a commitment to reform than there were in positions of great power under Brezhnev or even under Gorbachev's two immediate predecessors. It is worth emphasising that the changes which are now under way can hardly be considered a response to the activity of dissidents, for the dissident movement was already very weak by the time Gorbachev became General Secretary. It had been crushed. Thus, though it remains far less radical, the process of change within the Soviet Union is more akin to that in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s when the impetus for reform came from within the party itself than to that in Poland in 1980-81 when the Kania leadership retreated in the face of the 'extra-systemic' pressures of a spontaneous mass movement.

The Soviet context must, of course, be distinguished from that of Czechoslovakia, too. The political cultures of the two countries remain very different and the strength of indigeneous conservative forces in the Soviet Union is much greater than was that of their counterparts in Czechoslovakia. There are, moreover, complicating factors which even Soviet *reformers* must bear closely in mind. If in Czechoslovakia there was (and is) a relatively mild nationalities problem in the shape of strained relations between Czechs and Slovaks, there is in the Soviet Union – with over 100 different ethnic groups, many of whom have administrative responsibility for their own national territories – a much greater *potential* problem of fissure. Hitherto, this has not been allowed to get out of hand, but some devolution of political and economic powers could whet local (and thus, in many cases, national) appetites for greater autonomy.

For many reasons, therefore, the present time in the Soviet Union is a period of political struggle. How far the reform process will go the reformers themselves do not know. Since it is in part their relative open-mindedness and political realism which marks them off from their opponents, this is hardly surprising. For many of them, including Gorbachev, 'democratisation' is not just a slogan, but neither is it yet pluralist democracy. We should not expect to see in the near future the institutionalisation of autonomous groups (still less rival parties) capable of challenging the policies advocated by the top leadership of the Communist Party.

At the same time the 'diversity within monism' which is becoming ever more of a reality permits a substantial amount of informal group activity and some increasingly effective criticism. Soviet political commentators themselves point to the role of Russian creative writers in getting the party and government leadership to reverse a decision already taken to start work on a massive diversion of Siberian rivers for the irrigation of Central Asia.[6]

To the extent that a conscious broadening of the limits of the possible within the system is taking place – so that, to take a few examples, criticism of the Stalin era is once again appearing, *Doctor Zhivago* is scheduled for its first-ever Soviet publication in the widely-read literary journal, *Novy mir*, in 1988, and demonstrations in Kazakhstan in December 1986 with strong overtones of ethnic animosity were promptly reported by the Soviet mass media – this may be interpreted as no more than progress towards a more enlightened authoritarian regime. Such a change – far removed from the totalitarianism of the Stalin era and the unenlightened authoritarianism of the Brezhnev years – should not be dismissed as negligible. But in the period since the 27th party congress and especially at the very important plenary session of the Central Committee in January 1987, there have been signs of something more.

'How far the reform process will go the reformers themselves do not know'

Gorbachev himself (and certainly the reform wing of the party intelligentsia) seems to regard a measure of political reform as desirable both in itself and as a necessary complement to economic reform. Some elements of 'democratisation' have now been proposed by Gorbachev – in his January plenum speech – which, if fully implemented, would be quite a remarkable change from established Soviet practice. This is particularly true of his proposal that there be more than one candidate for party secretaryships (including first secretaryships) at all levels from the district up to the union republican and that the elections be by secret ballot at meetings of the respective party committees. Rather more vaguely, he added: 'The Politburo's opinion is that further democratisation should also apply to the formation of the central leading bodies of the party, I think this is wholly logical.'[7]

Some may view it, rather cynically, as an attempt by Gorbachev to speed up the personnel change throughout the party and to get more of his supporters into key positions. In that context, his insistence that the party leadership retains its powers to select cadres could be seen as a safeguard against local party committees choosing opponents of reform. But it is hard to see why he should raise the issue at all unless he meant it to be taken seriously. One of the contributory factors to Khrushchev's downfall was his fixing compulsory percentage turnovers for the membership of all party committees from top to bottom – a move which induced feelings of insecurity within the very party apparatus on which his power rested. Many party secretaries may feel similarly insecure in the light of Gorbachev's recent proposals. A willingness to incur the costs of generating such dangerous emotion would appear to betoken a determination to implement a reform which would indeed enhance control 'from below' while not, of course, going so far as to abrogate control 'from above'.

In general, Gorbachev's speech to the

3. Eleven full Politburo members, eight candidate members and twelve Secretaries of the Central Committee do add up to twenty-five people because six of them hold full or candidate membership of the Politburo jointly with a Secretaryship.
4. *Kommunist*, No. 13, September 1986, pp. 61-73, and *Pravda*, 6 February 1987, pp. 2-3.
5. Burlatsky was at one time a speech-writer for Khrushchev and in the early 1960s he was a prominent member, and for a time the leader, of a group of consultants to Yuri Andropov who at that time headed the Socialist Countries Department of the Central Committee.
6. For example, Burlatsky in his *Marxism Today* interview, February 1987, p. 14.
7. This major speech of Gorbachev is published in *Pravda*, 28 January 1987, pp. 1-5.

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January 1987 plenum was even more innovative and important than his political report to the 27th party congress in 1986. It was, perhaps, the most significant speech by a Soviet leader since Khrushchev's speeches demythologising Stalin delivered to the 20th congress in 1956 and the 22nd congress in 1961. Among the other important points Gorbachev made were that Central Committee plenums had for years been brief and formal and that they must from now on be so conducted that 'there can be no persons beyond criticism or people with no right to criticise' and that the promotion of non-party members to leading positions was an 'important aspect of the democratisation of public life.'

He also asserted that the authority of the soviets needed to be further enhanced (and this seems likely to involve the introduction of competitive elections for deputies to soviets, at least at the local level, though, needless to say, none of the candidates would be challenging the 'leading role' of the Communist Party). Of great importance was his reference to the crippling effect of the Stalin era on Soviet development when he observed that Soviet socialist theory had remained largely fixed 'at the level of the 1930s-1940s' when 'vigorous debates and creative ideas disappeared . . . while authoritarian evaluations and opinions became unquestionable truths'. Noteworthy also was his suggestion that a party conference be held in 1988 to monitor the course of economic reform and 'to discuss matters of further democratising the life of the party and society as a whole'.

This last proposal was an important one. Party conferences – second only to congresses in terms of party authority – are rare occurrences; the last one was held in 1941. The significance of holding one in 1988 is that it keeps up the pressure for economic and political reform. The matters Gorbachev has put on the political agenda cannot now be conveniently forgotten.

On economic reform, Gorbachev has emphasised that only the first steps have so far been taken. One important step was the publication this February of the draft law on the enterprise which sets out the considerably enhanced rights and greater autonomy of Soviet industrial enterprises and associations. It embodies also the recently legitimated principle of 'socialist self-management' (which for long was regarded as a revisionist Yugoslav notion) whereby leading personnel in factories are to be elected by a general meeting of the work collective either by secret or open ballot, the latter decision being left to the discretion of the meeting. Of course, it remains to be seen how this draft legislation will be eventually improved (it has been criticised by among others, Zaslavskaya) and, more important, implemented.

So far the goals of the more radical Soviet economic reformers – explicit recognition of a role for the market as well as for central strategic economic decision-making – have been recognised only at the level of legalising small-scale private enterprise (which means, *inter alia*, that the Soviet Union is beginning to see its first private restaurants). But of greater importance for the economy as a whole will be the extension of the market principle into areas of the socialised economy. Gorbachev clearly recognises that the attempt to fix all prices administratively is a nonsense, but so far his support for a market element within the Soviet economy has been in the coded language of advocating a greater role for 'commodity-money relations'.

That is doubtless because there is fierce opposition from within the ministries and from many party organs to a reform which attempts to combine real concessions to the market with central planning (and the doubts almost certainly exist also at Politburo level). If, however, as seems likely, Gorbachev goes on to consolidate his power still further, the chances of quite far-reaching economic reform will be better under the present leadership than they have been at any time since the fall of Khrushchev – and Khrushchev's reforms are no model, for they were hasty, inconsistent and ultimately ineffective.

'It is clear that there is resistance and a struggle going on at all levels'

In some ways Gorbachev's strategy is a high-risk one. It threatens more vested interests and arouses more immediate hostility than Brezhnev's consensus style of rule. But Gorbachev's answer (which he often expresses in a phrase familiar also in Britain) is : 'There is no alternative'. There are many in the West who dismiss the changes taking place in the Soviet Union as no more than cosmetic; if that is so, it is difficult to understand why they are encountering such fierce resistance and why pushing through what Gorbachev calls the 'reconstruction' of the Soviet system in such an uphill task.

In his speech to the 18th Congress of the Soviet Trade Unions in February of this year, Gorbachev mentioned that the plenary session of the Central Committee eventually held in January 1987 had been postponed three times – evidently for lack of agreement on how the reform process should proceed.[8] It is often remarked that there is resistance at the 'middle levels' of the Soviet system to the Gorbachev 'reconstruction'. That is certainly true, but the middle levels alone could scarcely have held up the convening of a Central Committee meeting to hear the General Secretary's proposals if the policies embodied in them had from the outset received the unanimous backing of his Politburo colleagues. It is clear that there is resistance and a struggle going on at *all* levels.

There is also a tendency to say that because there are still dissidents in prison and restrictions on emigration, nothing has really altered. It is right to be aware of what has not changed. The release of Andrei Sakharov from exile and of a number of other dissidents from prison does *not* mean that dissent has been institutionalised. It is, rather, an attempt to bring some of them – and this applies in particular to a man of Sakharov's great distinction and moral authority – back 'within the system', given that the boundaries of permitted criticism have been extended and there are articles now being published in the Soviet press which only a few years ago would have landed their authors in serious trouble.

Similarly, travel abroad – whether in the form of emigration or for a short trip – remains a privilege rather than a right. In conditions of relaxation of East-West tension, it is a privilege which under the present Soviet leadership is likely to be much more widely extended, but we are some way off the day when Soviet citizens are free to leave the country at will. To go on from this, however, to say in effect that unless everything has changed, nothing has changed is an abdication of responsible judgement.

Gorbachev himself describes the process of reform and restructuring as 'irreversible'. As a politician, it doubtless makes a great deal of sense for him to do so; he has no need to give encouragement to his domestic foes. The outside observer must be more cautious and allow for the possibility that the current trend *could* be reversed. And doubtless many in the West – including some in the Reagan administration – would welcome a return to the old simplicities as well as to the days when they could rely on Soviet propaganda being more hamfisted than their own.

The reversal of the current trends and the defeat of Gorbachev would, however, be in the long-term interest neither of the people of the Soviet Union nor of the West. If (as, on the whole, still seems likely) Gorbachev does remain in office for years to come and, as previous long-tenure General Secretaries have done, strengthens his power and authority over time, this will open up new prospects within and outside the Soviet Union. By the end of the century Gorbachev will, at 68, still be younger than any previous General Secretary was when – for political or biological reasons – he demitted office. There is reason at least for hope that by that time the reform of the Soviet system will have made it qualitatively better than it has been hitherto and that opportunities will have arisen (which should not be passed by) for a more constructive relationship with the West. ●

This is an abbreviated version of an article which appears in the April-June 1987 issue of *The Political Quarterly*.

8. *Pravda*, 26 February 1987, p. 1.

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PULL OUT

GLASTONBURY 1987

Three days of the Glastonbury festival in June form the most important fund-raising event in the CND calendar. In a pull-out designed to tuck in your back pocket, *Marxism Today* gives you all the information you need to rock, roll, relax and reflect, and gets the views of former and present participants.

Pop goes protest

Steve Redhead, author of *Sing When You're Winning*, writes on the ever changing moods of pop and protest.

1987 may not *seem* much different from 1983: mass unemployment, disintegrating public services, ravaged inner-cities and long leads for the Tories in the opinion polls. A rabidly conservative music industry still gorges itself on the last of the big spenders (the post-war baby boomers) and the tabloids throw up any old story that links pop, lust and addiction. The 80s version of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll is a particularly nasty tale far removed from the 60s counter-culture that spawned the idea in the first place. But for once in the history of pop, the middle of a decade has *not* produced an upheaval: the 50s, 60s and 70s all witnessed spectacular cultural formations which might have led us to predict new eruptions between the election of 1983 and 1987. The eruptions didn't happen, and we may have to get used to the view that there will be no repetition of them in the future. In that sense these are quite significant times for the politics of pop: post-pop politics in fact.

One of the most obvious fashions to enter the pop market-place in the four years since June 1983 is, ironically, protest. New Popsters galore have queued up to jump on the social conscience bandwagon set rolling by Band Aid – Gary Kemp of Spandau Ballet for Red Wedge, Duran Duran for Amnesty International – and the musical form itself (guitar, vocal, concerned lyrics) has experienced something of a revival. Radio One recently saw fit to broadcast a documentary history (*Rebel Yell,* commentary by John Peel) which emphasised the solid traditions of protest, rooted in folk sensibilities. But earnestness, and putting your mouth where your money is, are no longer enough – if they ever were.

Costello: Voice of protest

At this year's Glastonbury – whether it is a wake (as seems more likely) for a Britain under a re-elected Thatcher government, or a muted celebration – the diversity of pop's link to dissent and nonconformity is on show. From 'indie-pop' through 'new jazz' to the Mancunian gloom and doom of New Order and the ethnic roots of Los Lobos, the range of musical styles is healthily wide: a testament to the myriad counter-cultures which Thatcherism and Reaganism have helped to create.

The two most intriguing acts, though, remain the straightforward folk/punk protest of The Men They Couldn't Hang, whose rebel-rousing chorus songs like *The Ghosts of Cable Street* have rightly become renowned, and the more oblique post-punk venom of Elvis Costello. It's hard to believe that Costello has been punching the pop clock for a decade now (almost as long as the Tories have been in office), but his sneering voice – it's not simply what he says but the way he *slurs* it – stands as *the* sound of pop protest in the Thatcher years. Resentful, bitter, damaged. Sure, *Shipbuilding* and *Peace in Our Time* – more conventionally protest songs in lyric and style – are well remembered, but last year's *Tokyo Storm Warning* and *I Want You* (singles from the *Blood and Chocolate* album recorded with the Attractions) are chilling in their political and personal desolation.

It was Costello, after all, who provided the savage irony at Live Aid with his rendition (electric guitar and vocal) of that old Northern folk song *All You Need Is Love* while all around him protested at African famine through a haze of Western affluence. The Wembley/Philadelphia 'nation' looked pretty much like an earlier incarnation in another decade with the same false dreams. What will he make of *glasnost* and Glastonbury in 1987? Book now to avoid disappointment.

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Bruce Kent, vice-chair of CND, talks to Sally Davison about the peace movement's strategy during the ongoing arms negotiations.

The CND factor

In the late 1980s the peace movement faces a number of difficulties. It has to maintain its momentum in the face of the deployment of cruise missiles and with little hope of governmental change. And, ironically, CND tends to boom when the international agenda is dominated by fear and disaster rather than, as at present, by talks and negotiations. Thus it needs to work out a strategy that can link into this international process.

Bruce Kent is realistic about both these problems, but not depressed. He recognises that 'CND is not in the powerful situation that it was in 1981-2 when there was an enormous national surge'. But he points out that 'CND is holding its own and changing with the changed circumstances. In its specialist groupings and constituencies – doctors, lawyers, local authorities, churches, trade unions – it is as strong now as it ever was. And I have yet to address a local meeting of less than 100 people, which is astonishing for any issue. In this business it is perseverance that counts – to keep on letter-writing, phoning, to keep increasing the general level of public consciousness, to influence the climate in which disarmament is discussed.'

He sees involvement in the international arena as a crucial part of CND's evolving strategy. 'The more we emphasise our concern with international disarmament the better. We should not let ourselves be cornered into focusing exclusively on what does and does not happen to a particular set of submarines. I think we sometimes give our enemies a present by letting them suggest we are only concerned with unilateral actions by Britain. Initiatives in Britain and from abroad are absolutely complementary to each other.'

Kent was, for example, disappointed with the British peace movement's response to the Soviet test moratorium. He believes more imagination is needed to engage with developments overseas. The links that have been built with women peace campaigners in the Pacific have shown one way in which this can be done. He also thinks it is vital to be media sensitive, and to maintain a visible presence when international talks take place. 'And I think we should do our best to present counter-meetings, like the END convention, where alternative ideas are being expressed by people who are not in government.'

He believes that the peace movement can claim some of the credit for the existence of the current negotiations. And any small step forward from these negotiations would be welcome: 'If we could start the process of observing a set of missiles being destroyed, it would be a unique performance. It has not happened since 1945. It would make people feel "my god, this process is possible". If half a dozen missiles were visibly destroyed it would change the entire climate about disarmament.'

He dismisses the view that it was the West's firm negotiating stance that pressurised the Russians into negotiations. In fact many of the current difficulties in the INF talks result from Soviet 'short range' deployment in response to the West's 'firm' position over Cruise and Pershing. 'But we are seeing a kind of Orwell world in which people forget all that and say Thatcher is strong and powerful . . . this must be why the Russians are talking. The idea that someone might have some new ideas in the Soviet Union, original ideas, better than her ideas, is difficult for people to grasp.'

Kent recognises that there has been an important change in Soviet nuclear thinking. They are clear that no-one can win a nuclear war, and have moved away from the old and dangerous notion of balance. This is especially gratifying for those who believe in the international possibilities for CND. As he says, 'What I find encouraging is that nearly everything we have said to Soviet representatives over the last six years, in endless delegations both ways, I now hear echoing back in Gorbachev's speeches.'

PROGRAMME

Main Stage

Elvis Costello, Van Morrison. The Communards, New Order, The Robert Cray Band, Los Lobos, Ben E King, Taj Mahal, Trouble Funk, The Richard Thompson Band, Courtney Pine, Hüsker Dü, Paul Brady, The Men They Couldn't Hang, The Woodentops, The Mighty Lemondrops, Michelle Shocked, Misty In Roots, World Party, Rodney Allen.

Stage Two

El Sonido De Londres, The Mekons, the Oyster Band, Gaye Bikers On Acid, The Blue Aeroplanes, Brilliant Corners, Chorcazade, The Chills, Stump, Robyn Hitchcock and the Egyptians, Andy Shepherd Quartet, Eduardo Niebla and Antonio Forcione, Ben Baddoo and the Alaha Band.

Acoustic Stage

Richard Thompson, Arnold Bolt, Jackie Evans, Nick Picket, Prior String Quartet, The Three Caballeros, The Screaming Abdabs, Charlie Hernshaw Quintet, The Glee Club, Andy White.

Theatre

Skint Video, Attic Theatre, Theatre Rotto, Richard Cuming, Centre Ocean Stream, Jiving Lindy Hoppers, United Matrons, David Michelsen and Manna, Doctor Foster's Travelling Theatre, Panic Puppets, Malcolm Hardee and the Greatest Show on Legs, Beavers, Shikisha.

Womad Field

Ciego De Nagua (Dominican Republic), Franco and TP OK Jazz (Zaire), Gwerz (France), Tango al Sur (Argentina), Farafina (Burkina Faso), Alaap (India/UK), Krishna Murti Sridhar (India), Muzsikas (Hungary), Ait Menguellet (Algeria), Gasper Lawal (Nigeria/UK), Selda (Turkey), Flora Holton (USA).

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That was Zen, but this is now

Just when you thought it was safe to throw out those old cord flares, purple scoop-neck T-shirt with 'wizard' stars and those old buffalo sandals, along it comes again – the Dinosaur That Refuses to Lie Down – Glastonbury. The sole survivor of all the open air festivals which were thrown up at the tail-end of the 60s and dumped by the mid 70s.

I still carry images of overflowing Elsans, scorching rubber groundsheets and bearded bimbos competing to roll the longest, fattest double-barrelled joint which would later have them choking on the saltpetre of two dozen Rizlas.

So it was with some apprehension three years ago that I agreed to perform at Glastonbury to 2,000 happy lotus positions.

Heckling is rare – everyone is too out of it.

There are also makeshift stages everywhere, and you can never be quite sure whether that white-face clown doing the frantic mime is a legitimate performer or a hippy who has overdosed on purple haze and is wrestling with alligators of his own design.

When I was last there I was suffering from an agonizing back complaint, worsened somewhat when, in a narcotically-induced moment, I agreed to let this kaftanned woman idiot dance up and down my spine.

My osteopath took one look at my raddled frame and said: 'Why do you do this to yourself? You're not a teenager anymore.' I hung my head in shame and promised 'Never again.'

But that was Zen.

And this is now.

See you there maaaaaan!

Tony De Meur

And here is your host...

Why am I compering at Glastonbury? Well, I was asked very politely, and a certain sum of money *was* mentioned. And then there's the camping.

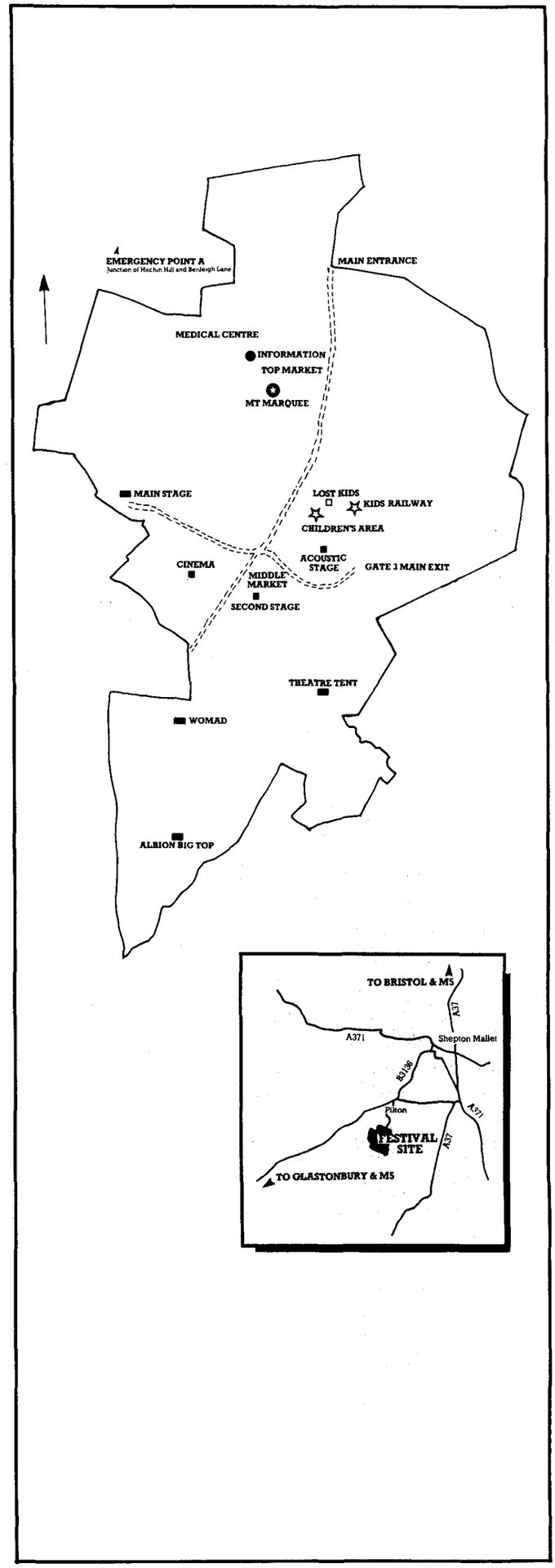
Now, to some people camping means a tent with three bedrooms, a fridge-freezer and a jacuzzi, but in my experience it is usually a large black bin liner and two sticks. Still, there's nothing like snuggling down in a nylon sleeping bag and getting your thigh stuck in the zip, nodding off to the sound of camp fires roaring around your flammable tent, waking up in a large puddle and spending three whole days crying in your cagoule. Now there's a fashion item for you.

Then there's the toilets. By day two, everyone is walking around buttocks tightly clenched, determined not to go for a number two until they are safely home. This is extremely difficult considering you spend your day eating lentil burgers and drinking lager.

I must admit, I have not done Glastonbury before, but I have done a similar event where I managed to rip my foot open on a tent peg. I then spent the next 12 hours with the St John's Ambulance Brigade, who seemed to do a wonderful job delivering babies and breaking up dog fights.

Hey ho. So why do we all go? Basically because it's in a damn good cause. There's loads of brilliant entertainment, and a jolly good time can be had by all – despite hail, sleet and horrid toilets.

Jenny Eclair



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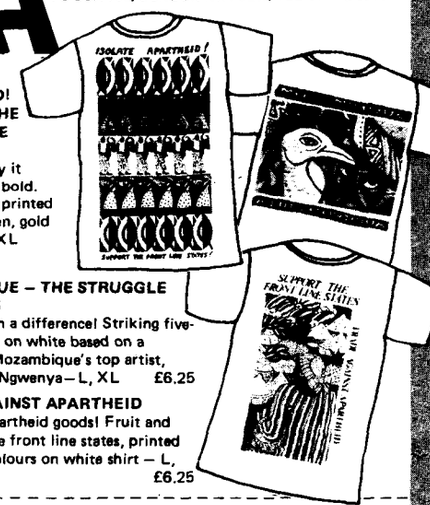

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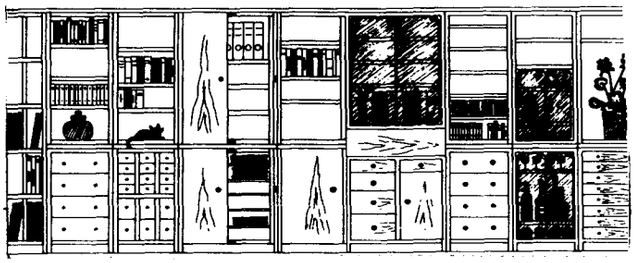
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Japan At Bay

Japanese industrial dynamism threatens the world's economic stability. But, argues **John Wells,** it could bring great benefits

Tokyo: An already crowded city being urged to build more

The world economy is in a fragile and potentially very dangerous condition: with deflationary pressures emanating from just about everywhere, forecasts for the growth of world output and trade are being busily revised downwards. Meanwhile, as the struggle for markets intensifies, the prospect of officially sanctioned trade wars draws ever closer, as the governments, particularly of the US and UK, take an increasingly high profile in defending or promoting the interests of specific groups of domestic capital – with Japan being singled out as the main adversary.

Japan's extraordinarily rapid economic growth since the Second World War has resulted from the vitality, technological dynamism and competitive strength of its industrial enterprise sector. This vigour has been reflected in the ability of Japanese industry to capture – largely through supplies from its domestic base – an increasing share of a rapidly expanding volume of world trade in manufactures, and there is little doubt that the strength of Japanese industrial capitalism poses a major threat to the survival of major sectors of US and European-owned industrial enterprise.

Indeed, large chunks of the industrial base of the US and Western Europe have already been abandoned in the face of Japanese imports, with substantial losses of output and employment in the sectors involved. Elsewhere, especially in certain high-tech branches of production, Western firms have hardly even bothered to mount a response to the Japanese challenger. In other vulnerable sectors of production, the tide of Japanese imports has only been held at bay by creeping protectionism.

However, the threat Japanese industrial capitalism poses to US and European-owned industrial enterprises has not gone away and will not do so. To make matters worse, competition for markets worldwide has been accentuated by the apparent desire of the Japanese people to abstain from enjoying the full fruits of their economic success, spending less than they earn, and transferring the resultant savings to the rest of the world in the form of an enormous trade surplus. This shortfall in Japanese aggregate demand, and the resulting 'savings surplus', is adding to the deflationary pressures operating on the world economy and intensifying the struggle for markets.

Up to the present, however, the twin pressures on output and employment in the West have not resulted in a generalised system of trade controls to thwart Japanese competition. The reason for

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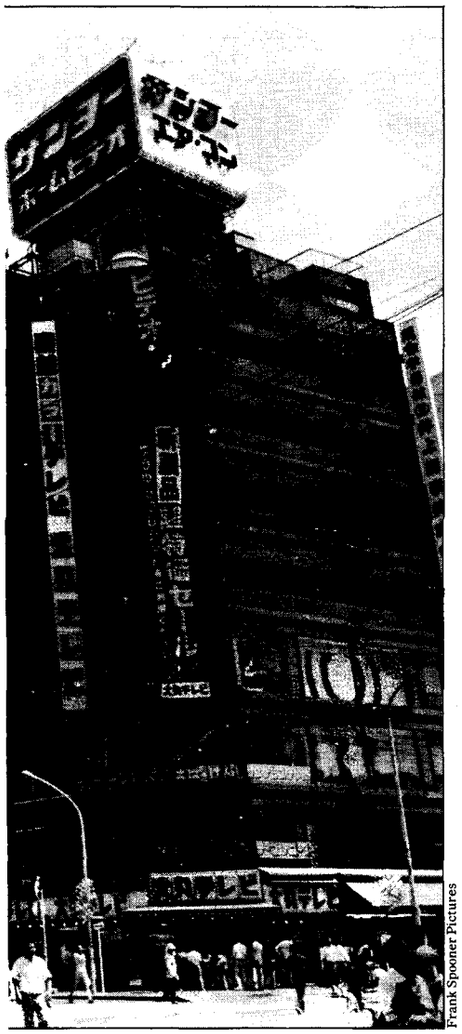

Frank Spooner Pictures

this is that, despite the big increase in unemployment which occurred in the early 1980s – especially in the four big Western European industrial powers (West Germany, France, the UK and Italy) – the arms and consumption boom staged by President Reagan's administration since 1983 succeeded in offsetting deflationary pressures arising elsewhere in the world economy and injecting a modest degree of prosperity.

But the US is now coming under intense pressure in international financial markets – as expressed in the virtual collapse of confidence in the dollar – to abandon its role of world economic stabiliser. And, as a result of growing deflationary pressures worldwide, the struggle for markets has intensified and is now producing much more overt forms of state intervention in defence of the interests of specific sectors of US and European industrial capital.

Japan's large export surplus in trade and in goods and services is easily explained – the Japanese are attempting to spend (by way of public and private consumption and public and private investment) less than they earn. This has been reflected in the appearance of a surplus of domestic savings in relation to domestic investment. When a country has such a surplus, it has no alternative but to transfer it abroad and become a net capital exporter. And the only way of transferring surplus savings abroad – ie, resources which are not being absorbed domestically – is to run an export surplus in trade in goods and services.

Japan's 'savings surplus' appeared during the course of the of the 1980s. In the 1970s, the Japanese devoted the incredibly high proportion of 40% of their national income to savings and domestic investment. Since then, the shares of both in national income have fallen considerably, with the investment ratio, especially during the 1980s, falling much faster than the savings ratio. As a result, Japan now possesses a surplus of resources which are not being absorbed domestically and are, therefore, *available to be transferred* to the rest of the world. Although quite small as a proportion of Japan's GDP, these surplus savings are fairly large relative to the absorbtive capacity of the rest of the world, given the size of the Japanese economy in total world income. Japan is now the capitalist world's second largest economy, with a per capita income of US$10,457 a year and a population of 120.6m.

What are the reasons for the emergence of this 'savings surplus'? First of all, as Japan has made the transition from the very intense rates of economic expansion and capital accumulation of the 1960s and 1970s to the much slower rates of economic growth of the 1980s, the need to devote such a high proportion of resources to domestic investment has diminished. For one thing, creating manufacturing jobs for people streaming out of agriculture, together with the associated economic and social infrastructure – as happened during the 1950s and 1960s – requires a considerably greater investment effort than is needed today to maintain the international competitiveness of already established jobs in the urban-industrial setting.

In addition, the 1980s have seen a decline in private housebuilding – which must partly reflect the transition to a more urbanised society – as well as cuts in government investment. The latter appear to result from the same kind of fiscal conservatism which has infected Western European governments during the 1980s, intensified, in Japan's case, by a desire to reduce a public debt burden relatively high by international standards. And while investment by the state and private housebuilders has fallen during the 1980s, investment by the private corporate sector has grown at a slightly faster rate than GNP (see table).

Recent falls in primary commodity prices, especially oil, have also contributed to the emergence of Japan's 'savings surplus'. Relative to manufacturer's prices, all rose at a lower level than at any time since the 1930s. Since Japan is exceptionally dependent on net imports of oil and other primary products, recent catastrophic falls in their prices have resulted in a substantial increase in Japanese real national income, much of which has been saved.

One way of looking at Japan's surplus savings is to see them partly as the product of the country's transition to a more mature stage of economic development, characterised by a shift to lower rates of economic growth during which the opportunity arises to abstain from complete enjoyment of the full fruits of success. Such an option would not normally be contemplated at an earlier stage of development, simply because of the intensity of competing claims on available resources. However, Japan has now reached a stage of economic development – much as Britain had in 1860-80 and the US in the 1920s – when it can afford the luxury of transferring some of its resources to the rest of the world and becoming a net capital exporter.

'The collapsing dollar signals the end of the US's role as world economic stabiliser'

Japan's insistence on spending less than it earns is, by itself, a source of deflationary pressure on the world economy, since Japanese savings represents a leakage from the circular form of world income. Such deflationary pressures will increase if the rest of the world tries to shut out the Japanese savings/export surplus, since the only way of doing this – short of resorting to protectionist measures – is to depress total world demand. Thus, if Japan insists on trying to run a trade surplus, the only way of preventing strong deflationary pressures worldwide *and* avoiding protectionism is for other participants in the world trading system to be willing and *able* to run a corresponding deficit. This is the role the US has played in the world economy since 1983.

In 1983, the world economy was poised on the brink of a deflationary precipice. During the early 1980s, following the lead given by Britain, governments in Western Europe and Japan had been adopting progressively tighter fiscal and monetary policies, resulting in a big increase in unemployment especially in the big four European industrial economies, and imparting strong deflationary impulses to the rest of the world economy. Meanwhile, in the heavily-indebted Third World countries, following the virtual cessation of new capital inflow in 1982, governments had no choice, if they were to meet their debt-servicing obligations, but to try to generate surpluses on their balance of trade in goods and services. And, for most of them, the only way of doing this was through a massive deflation-induced reduction in imports. As a result, some of the poorest participants in the international economy prematurely became involuntary net capital exporters. Problems with external debt had also caused a slow-down in economic growth in Eastern Europe, while economic expansion in Opec was being curtailed due to a big drop in world demand for its oil.

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'The most obvious candidate for Japanese largesse is the Third World'

Origins Of Savings

Balance of Trade in Goods and Commercial Services[a,b]
SDR billions

	1982	1983	1984	1985
United States	−26.3	−58.4	−110.4	−125.3
Japan	+6.1	+18.1	+31.6	+42.9
Other OECD	+29.4	+33.2	+44.2	+52.6
Developing countries	−45.7	−28.8	+3.7	+15.3

a. ie, services such as transportation, travel, insurance etc – excluding interest, profits and dividends.
b. Note figures do not add up: statistically, the world has a large trade deficit with itself.

Source: computed from IMF, Yearbook of Balance of Payments Statistics, 1986, Part II.

The table above shows how excess spending in the US resulted in a massive trade deficit, which accommodated the trade surpluses being generated elsewhere in the world. The table on the right shows how, while investment by the state and private housebuilders has fallen during the 1980s, investment by the private corporate sector has grown at a slightly faster rate than GNP.

The slow-down in Japanese investment

% change at constant prices: average, 1976-85

GNP	4.4
Total investment	3.5
of which Public	(1.4)
Private housing	(–1.5)
Private non-housing	(6.5)
Private consumption	3.5

Source: OECD, *Economic Survey: Japan*, Nov 1986, p120

Given these strong deflationary pressures, the massive US arms and consumption boom, stoked up by the second Reagan administration, has been the only factor preventing the world economy plunging into a renewed deflationary spiral. Not only was the US *willing* to perform this international economic stabilisation role, but the huge influx of foreign capital which flooded into the dollar, *enabled* it to do so by financing the resultant trade deficit. Moreover, in one sense, the US was well-equipped to perform this role at least for a limited period. With the competitive weakness of US manufacturing industry, as reflected in the voracious appetite of American consumers for both low-tech and high-tech manufactured imports, the spillover from the Reagan boom into the rest of the world economy (as reflected in the US trade deficit) was particularly large. This was added to by the strong appreciation of the US dollar in the period prior to February 1985 – by reducing the competitiveness of US goods and services in both home and overseas markets, dollar appreciation served to augment the beneficial effect of the US spending boom on the rest of the world.

As long as there were few constraints on the size of the trade deficit the US could incur, the growth of US spending could be fast enough – even given the American consumer's high propensity to buy imported manufactures – for there to be rapid increases in demand for overseas goods (as reflected in growing import deficits), as well as some increase in the demand for domestically-produced manufactures. Thus, for a time, the Reagan boom was able to stimulate manufacturing output and employment in both Detroit and Osaka.

The results of the US acting as world economic stabilizer in the period 1983-86 can be seen in the table: excess spending in the US resulted in a huge trade deficit, which accommodated and accentuated the trade surpluses being generated elsewhere in the world economy as a result of short falls in expenditure: in Japan, in Western Europe and in the Third World. Thus, we had the spectacle of the richest nation on earth enjoying a huge growth of spending (on luxury consumption, on arms and, to a lesser degree, on investment), sustained and partly financed by a massive injection of resources from the rest of the world (via the mounting US trade deficit), at a time when the Third World, in particular, was being remorselessly squeezed between its debt-servicing obligations and collapsing primary commodity prices.

Whatever we may think of the injustice of that situation and of the squandering by the US of those imported resources (on luxury consumption goods, such as BMWs and Jaguars, and on dangerous military expenditure, such as Star Wars), the world would have tumbled into an ever deeper deflationary abyss (and the Third World's adjustment problems would have been even more acute), had it not been for Reagan's Keynesian boost to world economic activity.

However, this was just a quick-fix solution for world economic stability. Given the competitive weakness of large parts of US manufacturing industry – at both its high-tech and low-tech ends – the US could not possibly stimulate both domestic and world economies simultaneously without running trade deficits on a scale which, sooner or later, would prove unacceptable to the international financial community. It is impossible for the US permanently to sustain trade deficits on such an enormous scale.

Firstly, the rest of the world is not prepared to absorb the never-ending stream of dollar liabilities (IOUs) needed to finance these trade deficits, since this would mean that dollar assets would be occupying a disproportionate and ever-growing share of world portfolios. Secondly, the US, having once being the world's largest net creditor nation, has quickly become its largest net debtor as a result of the capital borrowing requirement to finance years of trade deficits. Now, although these debts are denominated in the US's own domestic currency (unlike the debts of Brazil and Mexico), the US must go from deficit into surplus on its trade account if it is to stand any chance of servicing them.

The wholesale collapse of confidence in the US dollar currently underway in international financial markets is an expression of pressure in the US to reduce its trade deficits. The collapsing dollar signals, therefore, the end of the US's role as world economic stabiliser.

Of course, if the collapse in the US dollar went far enough, it could, given time, single-handedly eliminate the fundamental cause of the US trade imbalance – namely, an excess of expenditure (including federal spending) in relation to US domestic savings. However, the markets appear to want speedier and more direct action to reduce the trade deficit, via cuts in expenditure.

One way or another, therefore, the US is going to have to take action to convince the markets that the US trade deficit is on a rapidly-declining path – either by raising interest rates, which will increase the incentive to hold dollars and also serve to reduce US consumption and investment spending, and/or, much more fundamentally, by cutting back on federal (especially military) expenditure. However, as we in Britain know from bitter experience, the only way to cut back on imports – given the competitive weakness of domestic industry – is to reduce the demand for all goods (and services), both imported and domestically-produced. It is precisely this slow-down in the growth of US domestic demand which accounts for the current accentuation of protectionist pressure from US manufacturing industry.

As the US responds to the pressure to reduce its trade deficit, the world will have entered a new era of international development. No longer will late-industrialising countries (such as West Germany, Japan and Italy in the immediate post-war period, to be followed more recently by the Far Eastern, Asian, NICS and Brazil), be able to count

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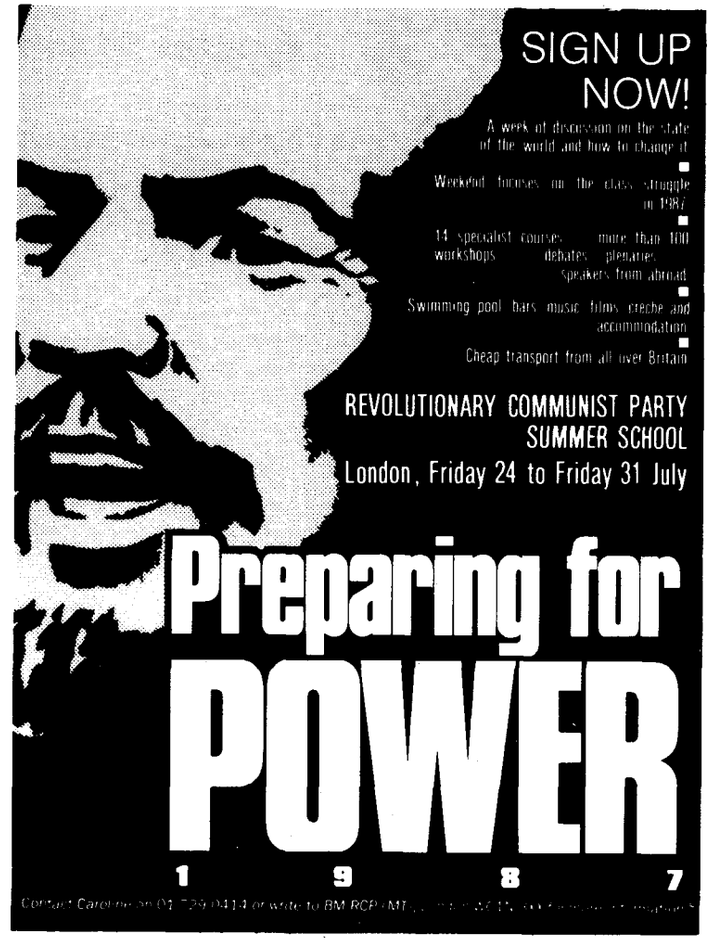
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on penetrating the soft underbelly of the US import market in order to sustain their manufactured export-led growth drives. The only consolation is that we can no longer rely, for international economic stabilisation, on the richest nation on earth receiving a massive injection of resources from the rest of the world – nor, in a properly-ordered world, should we.

'Why should an already rich and overcrowded nation be forced to undertake great infrastructure projects?'

Faced with growing protection and deflation, Japanese industrial capital is being forced, through yen appreciation, to sustain a huge reduction in the international competitiveness of its domestic economic base, while the Japanese state is being urged to adopt grandiose domestic spending projects, to reduce the country's savings surplus. Yen appreciation undoubtedly represents a major challenge to the adaptive capacity of Japanese industrial capital, while the spending proposals appear to strike at the foundations of a long-established Japanese social and political consensus, that such projects are unnecessary or undesireable.

There is little doubt that the combination of protection abroad plus appreciation of the yen, by sharply diminishing the attractiveness of the Japanese archipelago as a base from which to service world markets, is bound to result in a huge migration of Japanese capital abroad, to the advanced countries, as well as to the developing world. Capital migration can be seen as a way of compensating for the adverse social consequences of differential degrees of competitiveness of capitals of different national crigins in an increasingly integrated world economy – at least as far as the inhabitants of parts of the world economy, containing a relatively large proportion of unsuccessful enterprises, are concerned.

However, we cannot look upon proposals for encouraging the Japanese to spend more to diminish their 'savings surplus' in quite the same favourable light. Why should an already rich and overcrowded nation be forced to undertake great infra-structure projects? Examples suggested include a network of bullet-trains, great sewerage systems, and a new international airport – all projects which are neither necessarily desirable nor desired. Meanwhile, the Japanese are being urged to relax their urban planning controls in order to increase the supply of land and, thereby, encourage private house-building: such measures would appear to be intrinsically undesirable in such a densely-populated and overcrowded island. Moreover, they appear to pose a great threat to Japan's existing social, political and ideological concensus on such matters. Even more undesirable would appear to be proposals for increased Japanese military expenditure.

Surely, it makes much better sense, if the Japanese insist on trying to abstain from enjoying the full fruits of their economic success, to help them to do so. Rather than constantly pillorying them for the allegedly anti-social nature of their savings decisions and treating Japan's trade surplus as a curse, Japanese savings and the huge transfer of resources to the rest of the world which they represent ought to be considered a blessing. Why insist on looking this gift-horse in the mouth? Assisting the Japanese to make this resource transfer involves, firstly, the adoption of expansionary policies by the rest of the world and, secondly, the creation of appropriate mechanisms for sustaining the resultant trade deficits, which partly involves creating suitable financial assets in which the Japanese can hold their savings.

One obvious candidate for adopting reflationary policies and for being assisted in financing the resulting trade deficit in Western Europe. Instead of continuing to pursue generally contractionary monetary and fiscal policies, the major Western European countries (which have much the highest rates of unemployment in the whole of the Western world, far exceeding those of the US, Japan and the smaller European nations) could take a leaf from President Reagan's book. As he has shown, it is not difficult to create jobs so long as one is prepared to finance the associated trade deficit and absorb the necessary volume of foreign resources needed to sustain them. In a world beset by strong deflationary measures, increased indebtedness is a small but necessary price to pay for increasing employment in Europe. Unlike the case of the US, there is no need for Europe to squander these imported resources. With a properly-designed programme of reconstruction and reflation, Europe could begin the job of investing in the skills of its people and re-equipping and modernising its manufacturing base, as well as creating millions of ancillary jobs in the services, both public and private. By following such policies, Europe could, paradoxically, use Japanese savings to come to terms with the challenge posed by Japanese industrial dynamism. Meanwhile, the job of pursuing such internationally responsible policies of debt-financed expansion, having initially been taken up by the Third World in the 1970s and then adopted by the US in the early-to-mid 1980s, could now be passed to Europe.

The most obvious candidate for Japanese largesse is the Third World. At the moment, the most heavily-indebted Third World countries are being forced, given the dearth of new capital inflow, to generate substantial surpluses on their balance of trade in goods and services in order to be able to pay the interest due on their external debts. Such surpluses are largely being generated via deflation-induced reductions in imports. Economic recovery in the Third World is conditional upon these countries ceasing to be premature and involuntary net capital exporters and acquiring the capacity, once again, to become net importers of goods and services. Such a programme of Third World economic recovery, based on acceptable means of financing the associated trade deficits, would have the following obvious advantages:

1) Reflation in the Third World, based on a relaxation – via new capital inflow – of the current intense foreign exchange constraints on activity, could act as a powerful offset to the deflationary pressures on the world economy emanating from Japan;

2) The resultant trade deficit, which would be the counterpart to Japan's surplus, would enable the Third World to enjoy a transfer of resources (net) from the rest of the world, which is surely preferable to those resources being absorbed in Pharaonic projects in Japan;

3) Whereas the Third World debt crisis currently exerts a powerful drag on international economic recovery, reflating the world economy from below could not only have powerful 'trickle-up' effects on the advanced countries but, by igniting world recovery in the South, could serve to reduce international economic disparities;

4) Finally, while the Third World would be unlikely to want to accept Japanese savings directly in the physical form, in which they are most prominently available (namely, as electrical goods and cars), increased purchasing-power in the Third World would lead to an increased demand for US capital goods export and would, help, therefore, to take some of the pressure off US manufacturing industry.

What is required – and urgently – is some mechanism for recycling Japanese savings, which involves both a steady, non-volatile transfer of funds to the Third World (and Europe) and the creation of financial assets which give the Japanese a reasonable rate of return on their savings. The lesson from the recycling of Opec savings to the Third World by the private banks – both in its boom and in its bust phases – is that the job of recycling Japanese savings should not be left entirely in the hands of the private banks and that international financial institutions must play a relatively more important role. However, with Japan still a comparative political lightweight, lacking the military and financial hegemony which Britain and the US enjoyed at a similar stage in their economic development (ie when they became net capital exporters), Japan will have to work with and through the other major actors in the international system in order to bring about the necessary changes to the operations of the international financial institutions.

Let us hope that the admittedly rather faltering steps which are currently being taken in the direction of increased international economic co-operation will recruit in some sort of development along these lines taking place. ●

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Flowering Image

It seems that politics in the late 1980s is as much about presentation as it is about policies. For some, the approaching election will be about the politics of style at the expense of coherent argument. Peter Mandelson, director of campaigns and communications for the Labour Party, has recently taken up his post at Labour's HQ after working as a tv producer. Here he talks to Brian Hipkin about the Labour Party's new image and plans for the election campaign.

During your time as a tv producer what was your opinion of the way in which the Labour Party handled the media?
That prompts memories of the 1983 general election. I covered the election for London Weekend Television (LWT) and I was struck, like other journalists, by the sheer mismanagement and lack of professionalism in the Labour Party. I remember interviewing Roy Hattersley during the period and attempting to go through Walworth Road, but running up cul-de-sacs. There seemed to be no judgement as to the importance of tv requests. This was the result of a lack of organisation which characterised the party's approach to the election in general. After that election, the Labour Party became easier to work with. The professionalism of the party took a major jump when Neil became leader. He acquired young, experienced people to work with the media in a way that the previous leader had not.

How important is Labour's new image? How do you think it is going to affect the future style of presentation that the party will attempt to put across in the media?
The new image is very important because it presents to the electorate a party that is modern, fresh and up-to-date.

But of course that is only half the story. You cannot have good presentation without good content. But fortunately we are going in to the general election with both. That has been the achievement of the last 18 months.

What role did you play in the construction of this new image?
When I came in to the job, I had to learn it, I also had to change radically the operation and management of the department.

It has not been easy, but the introduction of the new rose emblem has worked well for us, expressing a certain warmth, a humanity about the Labour Party which brought us into step with our sister parties in Europe, who also use the rose. That reinforced the move, started in the 'freedom and fairness' campaign, to pay as much attention to the visual impact of what we were saying and doing as to the words we used to present our policies.

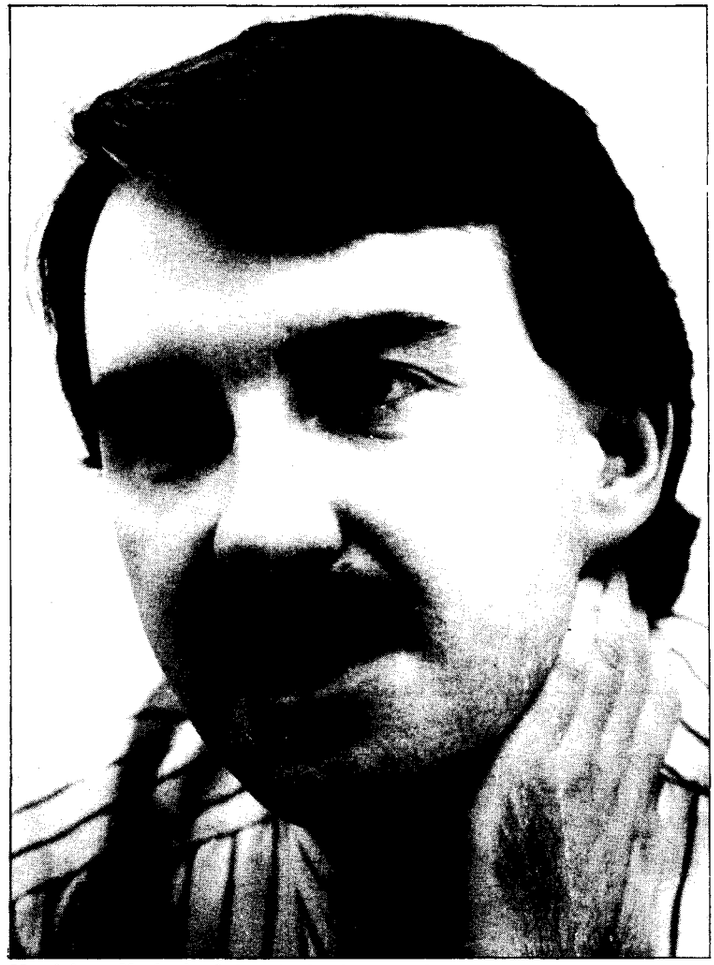
To what extent do you think the way parties have used the media in elections has changed?
The main development has been a proliferation of broadcast media. We now have almost 24-hour-a-day tv so we have to freshen up our stories constantly. The penalty, if we don't, is that people will write what they like. Of course they do that in some cases anyway. I have come to learn that there is very little I can do or say that will prevent certain newspapers making up their own stories.

The opinion polls are showing a high Tory lead. Do you feel that that is going to make a difference to the sort of campaign you would like to fight?
It will make us fight harder. Any element of the complacency that characterised the party earlier in the year or during 1986, and which might have allowed us to take too much for granted, has been eliminated.

Has the Labour Party learned from the way the Conservatives, and now the Alliance, have taken television seriously, in particular the use of non-politicians to put across political ideas in party broadcasts?
We produced a broadcast last year in which a number of celebrities said in 30 seconds what was important to them about the Labour Party and why they were supporting it. But these people are used to promote the party, not to be an adornment.

What sort of image is going to be promoted in the forthcoming campaign and which individuals are going to be pushed to the forefront in the media? Will we be seeing only Hattersley and the more familiar front-bench spokespeople? What about Clare Short, Ken Livingstone, Russell Proffit, Paul Boateng?
I hope you will see all those people. They all add variety and calibre to the campaign. But not only those you mentioned. You will be seeing others. There will certainly be no one-person-band, as I suspect you will see with the Tories' campaign.

How do you see the way the media treats the Left in Britain? Do you share the traditional Labour Party disdain for the media's treatment of the Left?
I have been through three phases since I came into the job. The first was idealism about what the party could achieve in terms of good, favourable publicity about us and the Left in Britain. The second phase was one of anger as I encountered what is not simply malign reporting in many cases, but incompetent and unprofessional reporting, which has always angered me. My third phase combines energy – because that has never left me – in seeking good publicity, and coming back again and again,



Mandelson: Marketing Labour's election appeal

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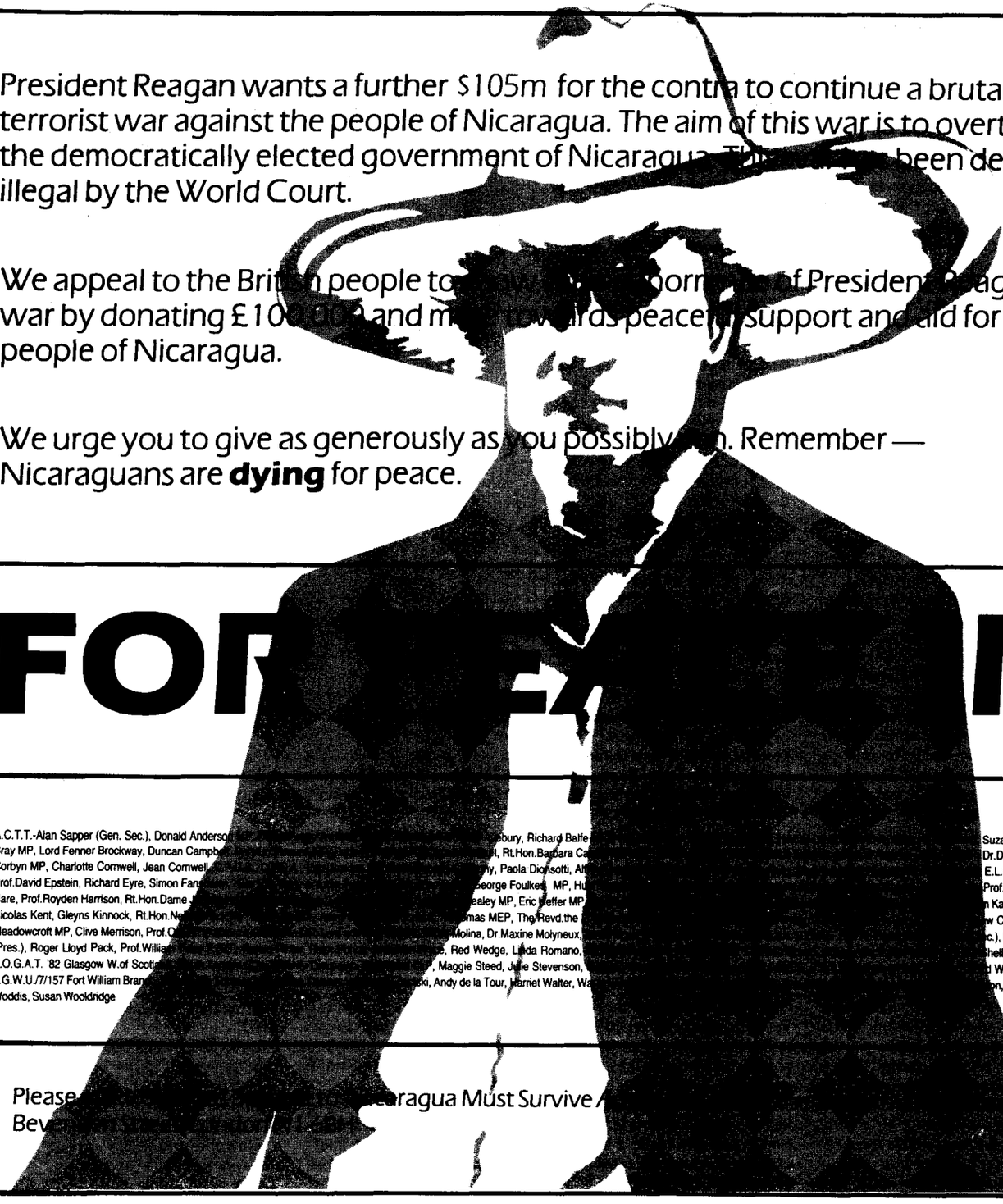

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despite all that has been thrown at us, to keep persuading journalists to write positively, fully and accurately about the Labour Party.

But this energy is combined with a certain reconciliation as to what certain newspapers and groups of journalists will write about us whatever we are saying. The general election campaign will be characterised by some appalling distortions about the Labour Party. All my friends in the parliamentary press gallery – and I have many, because it is the part of my job which I enjoy most – have told me for weeks now to keep calm and expect the worst ... it is now war between the Labour Party and a large number of the newspapers.

Recently we have seen an entirely made-up interview by the *News of the World* with Glenys Kinnock. She never met the journalist, she never gave an interview and yet there is nothing in the 'interview' which indicated that this was the case. We have seen a most appalling and orchestrated denigration of Neil Kinnock, and attacks on Labour councils or individuals creating the most dreadful media myths about them.

Does this distortion have a direction? Do you feel that perhaps it is not as uncoordinated as it appears?

I don't think it is directed or coordinated simply because newspapers tend to be rather lackadaisical operations. Journalists also realise what their editors and proprietors expect them to write. The word comes down from upon high that nothing must be written to hinder Mrs Thatcher's re-election. We realise it, we accept it as a fact of life. But directed – no.

How valuable do you consider party political broadcasts to be?

I am a producer rather than a consumer of party political broadcasts, and so I am biased. I think that they can convey an image of strength, of unity, of vigour about a political party. But they cannot be used to convey complex messages or much information. They exist to give a flavour, a feeling about a party and what it stands for. Within those constraints broadcasts can be very useful. I have paid a great deal of attention to raising the production values of our broadcasts by using better film, fewer lectures and introducing a sense of occasion. I have also tried to get one central message across rather than many different and often conflicting messages. Television is an accrued medium so it has to be used in a careful and subtle way.

If you could imagine yourself in a similar position with the Alliance or the Conservative Party, how would you be approaching the election campaign?

If I were in the Conservative Party I would be doing everything I could to disguise the last eight years and to hide the hidden plans that the Conservatives have if Mrs Thatcher is re-elected. If I were in the Alliance, however, I would be attempting to bridge that credibility gap that separates the party still. I would be trying to get Dr Owen out of bed with Mrs Thatcher, but I fear that would be a forlorn task.

Finally, are we going to see a fighting Labour Party putting forward a coherent programme but also extending its attack on the Conservatives and the Alliance?

You have got to see both. Our attack on the Tories, what they stand for, what they have done to this country and what they are preparing to do, is not enough. It's essential that we present a vision of what the Labour Party stands for – a vision which is supported by specific, practical policies. As far as the Alliance parties are concerned, I don't believe there is much of substance for us to attack, what we will be telling about those parties is the truth: that is that votes for them may have the ability to dislodge a few Tory MPs but not the ability to dislodge the entire Tory government. Only the Labour Party can do that. That argument against negative voting is an essential part of the assertive and aggressive claim that we are making for our policies. ●

Led Zep Run And Run

The notion of pop progress now seems laughable, as today's musicians reach back beyond punk – and even beyond modernity itself – to rediscover plain old pop. One neglected element in this cataclysmic shift has been the ever-growing influence of The Rock Band That Refuses To Die: not The Who (who passed away several years before they knew it), and not The Rolling Stones (although reports concerning their recent death may yet prove to be exaggerated), but Led Zeppelin, whose sound shows every sign of outliving the progressive rock aesthetic they so foolishly aspired to.

If you thought the Zeppelin sound had passed, listen a little harder next time you turn on the radio. Of course, it's hardly news that *Stairway To Heaven* is still one of the most requested songs on contemporary American radio, or that the cities of the USA are chock-a-block with kids learning its opening chords. But in the 1980s Led Zep have also found their way into the record collections of many unsuspecting consumers, via the technique of 'sampling'. Sampling music computers record a sound from a record (a drum beat, a guitar note, an orchestral chord) and store it digitally – thus allowing that same sound to be re-recorded with almost no loss of quality on today's discs. Producer Trevor Horn reportedly sampled Zeppelin's legendary drum sound for the Frankie Goes To Hollywood records, and Herbie Hancock apparently did likewise with the guitar chord on *Rockit*. More recently, The Beastie Boys, who some say are the most important new act since the Sex Pistols, pay tribute to Jimmy Page on their debut LP, and indulge in the now time-honoured practice of ripping off the John Bonham drum sound (copping the whole intro to *When The Levee Breaks*).

Meanwhile new dance floor versions of Zep songs are enjoying a boom in the US. Minimal Compact's *The Immigrant Song*, Vicious Rumours' *Whole Lotta Love* and New City Rockers' *Black Dog* take that Big Drum Sound and turn it into a dance-floor groove, stripping the Zeppelin sound of its ridiculous art-rock pretensions and showing us that it can still be, in 1987, music to *move* to, not meditate by. Where they fail is in their attempt to replace Bonham's unsurpassed rock drumming with rather weak drum machine programmes – but the mere fact that anyone should attempt such a task speaks volumes about Led Zep's place in today's pop. Their music is at the heart of one response to the dilemma of post-punk musicians and

Acquarius

Led Zep: Whole lotta influence

critics: to out-punk punk, or just try to pretend it never happened? For the latter school Led Zeppelin are simply the most audacious example of what a rock group could be.

But this doesn't fully explain why the Zeppelin sound has lasted so long. Obviously nostalgia is also a factor – although Led Zep's appeal here is less to older consumers (outgrowing hard rock is supposed to be a sign of maturity, after all) than to a young, largely male audience, who aspire to pop stardom, and want real musicians (Rush, ELP, GTR) to emulate. But that doesn't explain why modern producers making modern music so often turn to Led Zeppelin for inspiration: other 70s art-rock groups (Pink Floyd, for instance) continue to sell CDs by the BMW-load, and

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yet their influence on modern pop is negligible.

Part of the explanation lies in the production of the records. Jimmy Page was a producer long before he became a guitar hero and his efforts to capture the excitement of loud drums and guitar on record are simply technically better than most of his peers. Led Zep's records also went through a production process normally reserved for classical discs, and the result is that they *sound* bigger and brighter than other 70s releases. Of course part of their strength is also their good taste in theft – earlier this year they settled out of court with bluesman Willie Dixon, who sued them for using the *Whole Lotta Love* riff. Like the Stones, Led Zep's success was achieved partly on the backs of the black musicians whose riffs they used.

And now post-progressive pop is taking its revenge, pillaging the Zeppelin archives for new ways of using those sounds and rhythms. More current pop than you would care to imagine is in fact a dialogue with Led Zeppelin. Metal music, both heavy and light, has paid tribute to the point of parody and beyond for over a decade now. But outside the various forms of hard rock, Zep's influence can be heard in some unexpected places: the modern gated 'Phil Collins Drum Sound' invented on Peter Gabriel's third solo LP (and used on every record in the universe for the following 18 months) isn't John Bonham – but it might as well be. And the rock guitar on today's rap records is a better testament to Jimmy Page's Zeppelin days that anything he's done since. Even Johnny Rotten eventually put flesh on my hunch (long-held, but rarely ventured) that *Communication Breakdown* – on Zep's 1969 debut LP – is the first punk song, when his band Public Image Limited recorded their 1986 LP (*Album*) as a brilliant homage to the Zeppelin sound. More unlikely still, the Australian-based band Crowded House (this year's victims of the accolade 'The New Beatles') are currently wowing live audiences with a cover of Led Zep's *Dancing Days*.

There isn't anything new in this pop revisionism: since the collapse of punk, musicians and critics have made a habit of shocking us by suddenly lionising 1970s acts who were reviled at the time – T Rex, Abba and Gary Glitter have all had their 1980s revivals. What is surprising is the breadth of Led Zeppelin's influence, and its roots in the recording studio.

Led Zep mythology places them as *the* classic live touring rock 'n' roll band, kicking ass out on the road, while their rivals pottered about in the studio. Yet their lasting achievements were forged in the recording process – like today's electro-pop technicians, they used the technology of the recording studio to create new sounds and new ideas about rock that were far removed from the conventions of live performance. Zeppelin are usually discussed in terms of rock excess, but they were convincing minimalists, too – stripping the rock sound to its basics on the *Physical Graffiti* LP, and experimenting with the now-fashionable folk/rock fusions throughout their career.

It isn't some timeless spirit of rock and roll that has saved Led Zep from the garbage can of pop history; ironically, they've been rescued by new recording processes, new computer technologies and the new attitudes of pop producers, who now routinely raid the past to distill old sounds into new bottles.

Hard rock remains an unspeakable subject in left pop criticism, which tends to share the view of more conservative pop-watchers that Led Zeppelin are simply irreparably uncool. Unless some ingenious scratch-artist 'rewrites' the neanderthal sexism of their lyrics, that critical snub will remain both permanent and richly-deserved. Nonethless, the Led Zep *sound* does appear to be alive and well. It may even be hiding out somewhere in your record collection. ●

Andrew Goodwin

Thomas Baxter's painting of his room in London's Gough Square

George Elgar Hicks' Billingsgate Fish Market

London Life

Billingsgate fish market, as seen by George Elgar Hicks in 1861, is just one of the scenes from 'Londoners – The Way We Were', an exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints at the London Museum until the 2nd August, which looks at the way artists have depicted the people of London over the centuries. The exhibition includes works by Homan Hunt, Ford Madox Brown and Kate Greenaway, and encompasses everything from sentimental portraits of Victorian flower sellers to 15th century illustrations of Dick Whittington on his death bed, to the watercolour of the camel which caused Byron to 'pine again for Asia Minor'. It's a brave attempt to represent the diversity of London's population throughout the ages, but unfortunately its very breadth is also a handicap, leading to some superficial observations about the artistic treatment of different periods. ●

Rowena Chapman

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Illustration: Clifford Harper

Strine Wines

Australian wines are superb. In the past bulk supplied wines the Australian market wouldn't touch were dumped in Britain. But the last three to four years have seen full ranges of complex, subtle wines, with years of improvement left in them rivalling all but the very best that France can produce at prices which are great value.

With the dollar at $2.3 to the pound – 40% lower than five years ago – Australian wine has been easily able to break the price barrier of transportation half way round the world. When coupled with the almost corrupt gross increases in prices, associated with some of the more upmarket clarets and burgundies, even the EEC tariffs disappear into insignificance.

Reds One of the best wines available is Lake Folly. This is a personal venture of Dr Max Lake, who started his vineyard in 1963 in the famed Lower Hunter Valley in New South Wales – a few hours drive from Sydney. It is small – an annual production of under 3,000 cases – but produced on a part-time basis with fanatical care. It is a dry region with temperatures around 110°F when the grapes are ripening, but irrigation is used when needed.

The fruit taste pours out of the bottle and coupled with the taste of French oak from the barrels (within which the young wine matures), gives it the longevity and depth renowned in great wines.

It is a wine designed for every perception. I travelled from Sydney the 120 miles to the vineyard only to find the great 1983 vintage sold out. However, this pleading 'pom' was told Averys of Bristol (7 Park Street, Bristol) had bought the last. At £101.25 for 12 bottles delivered, you may think it expensive, but you could pay £800 per case for this year's Grand Cru equivalent.

Many Australian wines are blends of different grape varieties and sometimes grapes from different areas. A good example of an Australian blend is available from the Brokenwood Label, and is the 1981 vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon/Hermitage from its Hunter Valley and Coonawarra Vineyards; Lay and Wheeler (6 Culver Street, Colchester) offers this for £85.48 a case. This is a red wine with the subtlety of the Bordeaux Claret grape mixed with the robust Rhone grape Hermitage, or Shiraz as it is sometimes known, providing a young but powerful wine that will compliment a roast or casserole. Again the French counterpart may be a *Hospices de Beaune* at double or treble the price.

The cooler South Australian Coonawara seems to produce a powerful Hermitage, and cabernet grapes from both regions provide for a particular Brokenwood quality not characteristic of either region. Usually purpley in colour the wine is fruity and will improve in the next five-eight years. Very fine.

Whites Australians blend whites too. There are three particular ranges all of which are highly recommended. The first is *Chardonnay*. The best has been aged in oak which allows it to reach maturity about five years after vintage – a good substitute for white Burgundies, at half to a third of the price. The nose will classically be very strong in fruit, as with the taste and you will be able to detect lemon peach, or even apple. Try Rosemount Estate Show Chardonnay, it's won lots of medals and has been widely marketed in this country. It is a very pushy wine, plenty of ripe fruit, making it sweet but not sugary. Today it's available in a range of good wine shops around the £5 plus per bottle. Cullen's supermarket stocks this along with a good range of other Australian wines. The 1984 Hungerford Hill Pokolbin Chardonnay (£69 per case from Corney & Barrow, 12 Helmet Row, London EC1U 3QJ) is more subtle and dry. It's slightly better but with more of the flinty Chablis taste than the ripe fruit already described.

Second favourite is lemony Semillon; dry, oaky rich and full. I would suggest the widely available Brown Brothers 1984 as a good bet, again £5 plus.

The third major range is the Riesling, with a tang of grapefruit – one of the few wines that can be recommended with highly spiced foods such as Chinese and cheaper than the others at around £4.

If you are not convinced enough to spend £5 on a bottle of wine try the supermarket ASDA. Their own label Carbernet Sauvingon/Shiraz from South Australia is a superb introduction, for only £2.35. Like all good Cabernets, the warmth of tangy blackcurrants is there with the softness of plum and the colour to match. It's superb value, probably the best on the market. ●

Mark Sanders

Australian Wine Offer

Marxism Today's summer wine selection is from Australia with two bottles each of the six main wine varieties. A quality Bordeaux-style 1981 Berri Cabernet Sauvignon, dark with good fruit, together with two blends of Cabernet and Shiraz. The first, Orlando's Jacobs Creek, including the lighter Malbec grape, is a wine for ready drinking and excellent as a summer red. It contrasts with the heavier 1983 Penfold Dalwood, also from south Australia, which has a rich fruit flavouring. White wines included are the German-style citrus-flavoured blend Traminer Riesling from the Wyndhams Estate, spicy and very different from the subtle Semillon McWilliams Inheritance 1984 which is soft, lemony and dry. Serve well chilled. Finally the Orlando Semillon, crisp and elegant – not quite as fine as the McWilliams but good value.

Marxism Today Summer Wine Offer

2 bottles each of:
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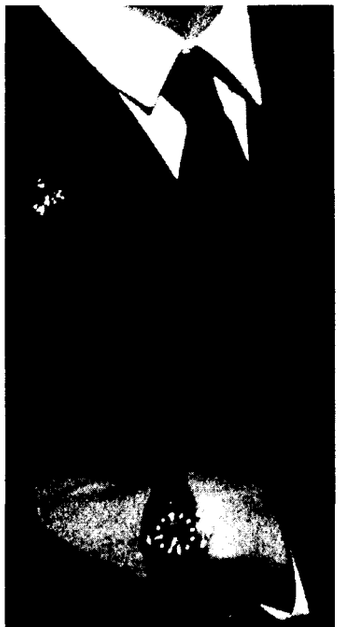

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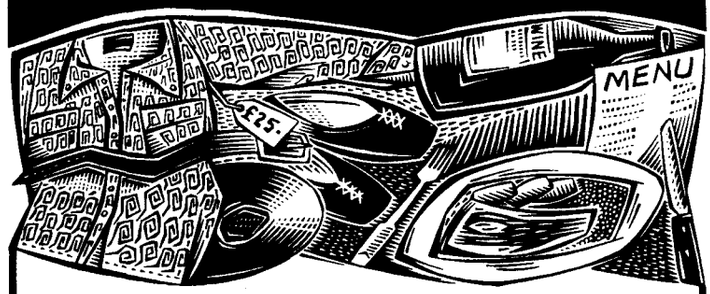

At last you can be comfortable while revolting in style. Baggy black Levi 501s worn with waxed Dr Marten shoes or black Clarks desert boots form the classic new look: sensible, practical and relatively inexpensive. National chain stores provide the basics, but markets allow you to accessorise cheaply.

Finally, to be left is to be hip. Soviet badges, worn as much for the effect of red and black as for any political principle, are a must on the right arm of your buffalo bomber jacket. Slip the jacket on over the most stylish T-shirts of the moment (probably from the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign and Anti-Apartheid Enterprises).

Confident political expression goes best with stylish accessories like subtle silver watches with metallic wrist-bands (£20 from American Retro, 35 Old Compton Street, London), American badges (safe sex safety pins will do the trick), rubberised rucksacks and cycle paraphernalia. Baseball caps (red cotton and black leather) and metal braces (both from Flip in Glasgow and London) complete the East meets West look.

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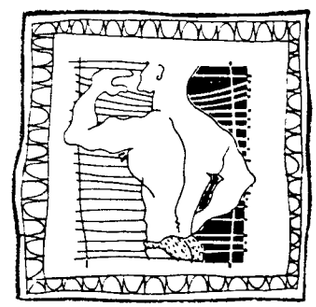

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CHANNEL 5 CHOICE

All-Sport

McEnroe: Taking the high road

Scots Stage Tennis Coup

Ivan Lendl, the world's top tennis player, won't be playing at the traditional pre-Wimbledon tournament at London's Queen's club starting on June 8.

There's nothing unusual in that, you might think. He hasn't played there for the last two seasons either. Players like to warm up for Wimbledon at Queen's because the grass courts are similar and so is the weather. Lendl doesn't like playing on grass – it's his one weak spot – but that doesn't matter too much because Wimbledon is the only major championship left in the world still played on that surface.

What makes this year different is that Lendl has decided to play at the Scottish Championships in Edinburgh, which have been organised for the same week as the London tournament.

Furthermore, John McEnroe has announced his intentions to play in Scotland as a warm-up to Wimbledon after six months out of the circuit.

This has sparked a row between the organisers of the Stella Artois-sponsored Queen's event and the Scots, who are naturally delighted with their coup of having captured the world's No 1 and a former champion, for their eight-player tournament, which they believe will do wonders for the sport north of the border. To rub further salt into the wound the Bank of Scotland, spotting a good bet, have decided to put up a six figure sum to finance the Scottish event.

Queen's tournament director Clive Bernstein said: 'The clash of dates is contrary to what tennis is all about. It is affecting a well-run British circuit.'

The Scots might feel that it's a pretty well carved up British circuit geared totally to the interests of the big tournaments in and around London.

What's really worrying the Lawn Tennis Association, the game's governing body, is the consequences for the future if, after playing in Edinburgh, Lendl or McEnroe go on to win Wimbledon. Other players might believe that it is not necessary to play Queen's but go off and compete somewhere else. And if there's one thing the LTA doesn't want, it's the spotlight moved away from London and its south-based monopoly on major tournaments.

Meanwhile, Lendl and McEnroe will be able to prepare in comparative peace for Wimbledon and the Scots, hopefully, will boost their tennis and establish a regular event attracting even more big names in future years. ●

Tom Lester

Hi-Fi Hijack Under Way

It took the record industry two expensive attempts to sell the public the Compact Disc, but it's been well worth the effort. At a stroke, the companies' entire back catalogues could be sold all over again to the same people who bought the vinyl first time round. And all in the name of enhanced consumer enjoyment.

Quadrophonics proved a culde-sac, but microchip technology has ensured that even the Brazilian pauper listening to a Hong Kong pirate cassette of Bruce Springsteen on his $20 Taiwanese walkman is enjoying an audio experience available only to hi-fi buffs a decade or so back.

Compact Discs, where information is stored digitally and relayed by laser beam, represent a quantum leap in audio technology. Just how much better they make your favourite tunes sound remains in dispute. Their clarity has already made them *de rigeur* in the classical market, but pop fans are divided. 'It's the same people who used to tell you that you hadn't heard Pink Floyd properly until you were stoned and on headphones,' remarked one music biz trouper of the new CD market, which remains primarily 25-40; good news for record companies facing a long term decline in the teenage population and the competition of home taping.

Alas, just when the record biz thought it was safe, a new technological peril has emerged from the East which makes conventional home-taping look soppy. Digital Audio Tape offers CD quality sound on a cassette the size of a fat credit card. At present the players are bulky and expensive (£800); about where CDs were four years ago.

DAT tape strikes to the core of copyright restrictions because it makes every consumer a potential manufacturer of a flawless product. As Rob Dickins, chairman of the record company WEA UK, sees it: 'The technology is there to destroy our business.' This time round the biz is looking for a levy on recorders rather than cassettes to compensate for its 'lost' profits. The new trade wars are only just beginning. ●

Neil Spencer

In A Right State

Graham Budgett's 'Feel like I Died and Went to Heaven'. Such was the response of a Ku Klux Klansman as he was acquitted by an all-white jury of the murders of five Communist Workers' Party members. The murders were videotaped and transmitted on nationally networked tv. Budgett sees this piece, part of his 'A Brief History of the USA', as a memorial and an allegory of the state of America that could produce such events while a whole nation watches.

It's part of an exhibition of photomontage work which examines regimes of the right, 'In A Right State' and which also includes the work of the most famous photomontage artist, John Heartfield and his modern disciple, Peter Kennard. Heartfield, best known for his anti-Nazi work in the 1930s, championed photography as an agitprop weapon because it was the most accessible form of visual communication for a mass audience.

Kennard's work echoes many of Heartfield's concerns – the authoritarian state that attacks civil liberties, the welfare system and the labour movement – but it is brought up to date with attacks on Star Wars and the nuclear threat. The photos are mounted on wire mesh fencing and are completed by a motorised, waving Thatcher.

The exhibition is currently on show at Camerawork, 121 Roman Road, London E2 and will be touring the country. ●

Martin Pople

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Time-worn Trekkers: Ambassador Sarek, Amanda and Spock

Hollywood Boldly Goes

Star Trek fans, 'Trekkies,' have had to wait a long time for a good film version of the tv series. In the first three films, the original's weaknesses – poor script, low budget sets and clumsy cold war analogies – were magnified on the larger cinema screen. This time, Leonard Nimoy – better known as Dr Spock of pointed ears fame – realised that the strangest world of all is our own. So in *The Voyage Home: Star Trek IV*, Captain Kirk and his crew return to San Francisco of the 1980s. The resulting film is confident, witty and effective.

The meeting of the two worlds is perfect. In California to announce that you are a spaceman from the 23rd century is to be normal. Difficulties arise when Spock meets a punk or Kirk orders an Italian meal. For a change, quality editing and scriptwriting bring out the full humourous potential of such scenes. At the end it is our times and not the future that seem odd.

Surprisingly, what is green about this film is not the monsters but the politics. The crew's mission is to reverse the 20th century's destruction of whales. Why? Because alien visitors from the future are seeking to contact the whales (quite why we never find out!); if they do not, they will destroy the earth. Absurd perhaps – but Spock and McCoy, the space ship's doctor, find our nuclear power and medicine not just absurd but barbarous. Here *Star Trek* is closer to radical science fiction than perhaps either realise. ●

Nick Mirzoeff

Jamaica's Beat

Since Bob Marley's death, reggae has left the world stage and gone back into the ghetto, to the Kingston sound system dances – hence the current style is known as 'dance hall style'. Too many critics today are too ready to write off reggae, but it has had a consistently important influence on British pop styles – listen to **The Police, Madness** or **Culture Club** for a white interpretation. We asked Paul Bradshaw, writer for *the Wire* and the *NME* and reggae enthusiast for a beginner's guide to reggae's long and varied past.

Fifties Jamaica tuned its radios to US radio stations and the sound systems (powerful mobile discos) played **Fats Domino** and **Amos Milburn** but coinciding with independence it created its own beat – Ska.Superlative compilations *The Birth Of A Music – The Bluebeat Years* and *Intensified, Original Ska Vol 1&2* have fantastic Jamaican jazz/r&b from premier session band, The Skatellites.

The uptempo shuffle beat of ska mellowed into Rocksteady. Try the compilations *Catch The Beat* and *Hottest Hits*. As the influence of horns waned so wonderful harmony groups came into their own. Treasure Isle was *the* rock steady studio, recording groups like the Paragons, Techniques and Melodians. The word reggae first surfaced on **Toots and The Maytal**'s *Do The Regggae* in 1968 and has been with us ever since. *Rebel Music*, a compilation of hits from the Trojan label shows the kind of music that rocked the dance halls right up until the emergence of the Rockers' beat in 1976.

Studio One records are the backbone of Jamaican music. Sample any from this list *On Top* – **Heptones**, *Presenting – Burning Spear; Live Loving* – **Sugar Minott**; Declaration of Rights – **Abyssinians.** Run by the legendary **Clement 'Coxsone' Dodd** virtually every ranking (leading) artist cut their musical teeth at **Dodd**'s studio.

The Wailers (Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer) produced some of Jamaica's most radical and innovative music and lyrics. From their Rude Boy (disaffected youth) beginings they epitomised conscious angry Jamaican youth. Their first Island LP *Catch A Fire* broke reggae internationally but they split up after the second LP *Burning*. Bob continued on Island and all his albums, prior to his untimely death are crucial. **Bunny Wailer** has produced a stack of stunning, incisive songs for his Solomonic label, but *Blackheart Man* is an equisite album.

Dub is an invention wherby the studio engineer doubles as superstar **(King Tubby, Upseter, Prince Jammy)**, take vocal and rhythm tracks, pull them apart and reassemble in a radically new form. **This Is – Augustus**

Marley: Jamaica's innovator

Pablo and African Dub Chapter 3 have **Errol T** at the controls. He takes **Pablo**'s Far East melodies and haunting melodica into a new dimension.

Innovative sound system deejays were the precursors to New York's rappers (toasting or rapping is talking or chanting over a basic beat). **U Roy** is the originator and **Big Youth** (both of Version Galore) the foundation; **Phillip Levi** of **Trouble in Africa** is the champion of the fast style – he's black British and what a lyricist! **Shinehead** (Rough & Rugged) is versatile and modern, the enigmatic boss of Reggae/rap fusion. A man to watch.

Don't forget **Judy Mowatt**'s *Black Woman* LP or *Mi Cyaan Believe It* by the late **Michael Smith,** tradgically stoned to death by Jamaica Labour Party thugs, another victim of the island's fratricidal political warfare. A **Lee Perry** compilation is an essential household item *(Reggae Greats* – or *The Upsetter Collection)* and those who wish to savour the deeper roots of Rasta music check out **Count Ossie** and **The Music Revelation** of **Rastafari's Groundation** 3 LP set. ●

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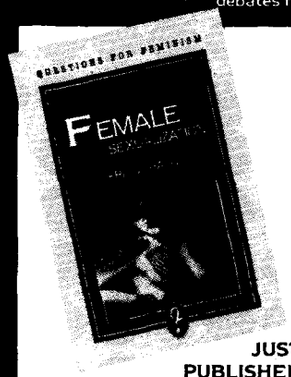

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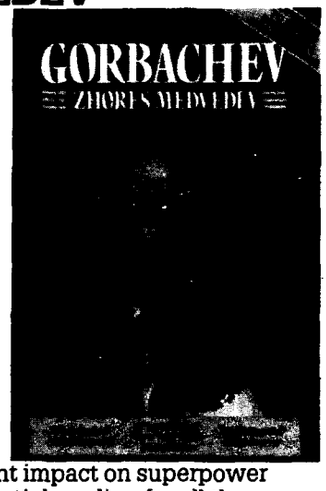

Zhores Medvedev, distinguished Soviet scientist and writer, has now revised his authoritative biography (first published in 1985) to take account of Chernobyl and the Iceland Summit. His appraisal of Gorbachev is cool and considered, and the book provides a compelling account of the Soviet political system. Mikhail Gorbachev is likely to lead the Soviet Union into the next century; he has already had a significant impact on superpower relations. This book is essential reading for all those interested in the development of world politics.

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Women, Politics and Novels

With the Feminist Book Fortnight taking place from June 6-20, *MT* looks at new teenage fiction and the state of black British writing, dips into the sci-fi genre, revisits a 19th century classic, and asks a number of very different women to choose a novel that influenced them politically.

Hopeful Heroines

Sex, drugs and violence filled the books I read at at school. **Carrie, Christiane F. Girls and Sex** were eagerly passed from girl to girl; our heroes were the tough-talking innocents of Steinbeck and Salinger. Light relief came in the form of true love photo stories in teenage magazines which we bought with scorn, but read avidly in lunch breaks. It was the excitement of reading 'adult' books or the superiority to be gained laughing at 'trashy' magazines that made us feel grown up. Adult attempts to judge our taste, whether in clothes, music or books, were met with suspicion.

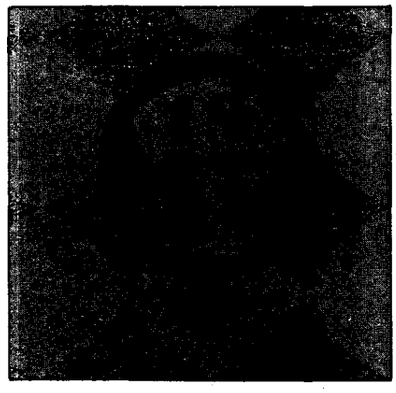
It was with some scepticism, then, that I viewed Upstarts from *Virago* and Livewire from *The Women's Press*, two new series of reasonably priced paperbacks aimed at teenage girls and young women. The problem for publishers aiming at a teenage market is whether to pander to existing tastes, and risk being patronising, or to be more adventurous, and risk missing the mark. Livewire goes for the former approach and in the case of **The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou,** gets it right. Kristin Hunter's book has all the ingredients for success: a positive, street-wise heroine fighting for fairness in the violent world of a black American ghetto, rebelling against school, adults and whites until she and her friends discover 'soul'. It is a welcome change to find a heroine in the role of survivor, and Hunter avoids the easy options and happy endings that teenagers find so galling – though Sister Lou finds a man along the way, he is not *the* man and she soon tires of him.

Upstarts from *Virago* takes a broader and more inventive approach, including both fiction and non fiction in its initial titles. **Bitter-Sweet Dreams,** for example, a collection of essays, stories and poems by the readers of *Just Seventeen*, gives teenage girls a chance to speak for themselves. Giving more scope to young writers would seem to be the solution to engaging the teenage market without being patronising. The problem here, however, is that what teenage girls write is not necessarily what they want to read. The observations in **Bitter-Sweet Dreams** on boyfriends, exams and discos soon become repetitive, being all too common. The 'bitter' stories of those writers coping with more unusual problems – epilepsy, anorexia, a father in prison – come closer to the balance of vulnerable wisdom and raw-edged reality with which teenagers tend to identify.

Melanie McFadyean treats a similar range of experiences in **Hotel Romantika and Other Stories.** Here, stories about boyfriends, friends and school are given a surprising twist, while less common problems, rape and a sister's death, are treated with straightforward sensitivity. The best stories capture the confusion, excitement and pain of heroines caught between the safety of childhood and the freedom of adulthood. Like Kristin Hunter, McFadyean concedes to teenage tastes in subject matter without making any concessions in style, avoiding the suspicion that this is an adult writing for 'children'.

If Livewire and Upstarts continue in this vein they could provide a positive supplement to teenage reading. They might not replace **Carrie** and trashy magazines, but then, given the healthy scepticism of most teenage girls, why should they? ●

Kate Barker



Fires Of Destiny

Recent years have undoubtedly seen an upsurge in the publication of writings by black women but the majority of these are by Afro-American women. The huge success of writers like Alice Walker and Maya Angelou has proven beyond argument that black women are accomplished writers who, in reclaiming the written word, have become signifiers of a political and historic moment. Black women are taking control over representations of themselves and interpreting their own lives. As a political gesture such writings are a direct intervention into literary traditions which have for too long distorted and marginalised such voices.

Ironically, a parallel upsurge in the publication of British black women's writings has not yet occurred, despite the fact that many black women in Britain have been writing for some time. Poetry, novels, short stories, autobiographical narratives, political and discursive writings have been the predominant forms of writing for black women on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet British black women have been neglected by the majority of the publishing houses. There is evidence that this scenario is going to be changing fast in the coming year. Encouraged by the success of Afro-American women writers, a spiral effect is occurring.

With the publication of **A Dangerous Knowing: Four Black Women Poets** *(Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1985)*, the ground was set for futher publications by British black women. Since then we have had **The Threshing Floor** a collection of short stories by Barbara Burford *(Sheba)*, **The Unbelonging**, a novel by Joan Riley *(The Women's Press)* and more recently **Watchers and Seekers** a poetry collection edited by Rondha Cobham and Merle Collins *(The Women's Press)*.

This month we see a historic publication of a poetry anthology by the first and only black women's publishing press in Britain, **Black Women Talk.** The impetus for the formation of the press came from the following need: 'We feel the publishing industry has ignored and silenced the views and ideas of black women living here. It is important therefore for us to restore the lines of communication which have been historically destroyed and reestablish the links between our scattered and isolated communities.'

Black women are writing today fired by many needs. Some feel an urgency to fill out absences in history, while others are concerned with creating images of ourselves which are authentic and textured, devoid of racial or sexual stereotypes. Still others write to create imaginary landscapes where black women are heroines and in control of their own destinies. Whether we write to reclaim, affirm or celebrate ourselves and our experiences, black women writers in Britain will continue to grow and intensify their creativity. ●

Pratibha Parmar

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BOOKS

Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* books turned me, at a stroke, into a rampant feminist, socialist and Scottish separatist; they made me acutely conscious not only of class divisions but of sexual and local struggles and inequalities as well. My difficulty, which at first puzzled me and then made me very angry, was that I could not identify with any of the main characters. The options presented to girls were limited to acting like a surrogate boy, like the very peculiar Georgina, or a simpering nerd, like Anne. Only boys were allowed to be themselves. If I identified with anyone it was the servants' child, the one who was always 'naughty' and excluded from the 'lashings of ginger beer'. Both my own parents worked and the discrepancy between that cosy middle class home counties Englishness and my own Scottish reality was enormous.
Muriel Grey (presenter of C4's Media Show)

The novel used to mean Mills & Boon to me. But that was before the strike. Towards the end (which was also a kind of new beginning) Beatrix Campbell came up to one of our meetings and gave me a copy of her book *Wigan Pier Revisited* and that was a turning point for me; it made me understand what struggle really meant. I felt that I was no longer alone. It was Bea who recommended some novels to me and these really changed my perceptions – they were Marge Piercey's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Ursula Leguin's *The Dispossessed* and Margaret Attwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. All three are novels about possible future worlds which portray frighteningly totalitarian and sexist societies but which also offer an alternative future, which, especially in the case of Marge Piercey's book, is socialist, feminist and based on ecological principles – the kind of future I would like to see. After this I became curious about women's writing and now have shelves of books from Virago and Women's Press. Recently I've even been reading 'the classics', which I used to think had nothing to do with my life. But now I'm reading them from a different perspective.
Ann Suddick (secretary of the Durham Miners' Support Group)

Maxim Gorky's *The Mother*, which I read when I was about 14 – I hadn't read anything except love stories until then – transformed my conceptions of history and of ideas. In the book the mother is recreated through the eyes of her son. My own mother was in a trade union at this time and that was something I didn't know about or see. So it was kind of a eureka! book for me.
Jo Spence (photographer)

These are just two of the many many books which have had an influence on me: Audrey Lewis's *The Black Unicorn* awoke in me a desire to explore my black female mythic heritage, and her collection of essays, *Outsider*, helped to clarify my ideas and confirm my feeling. That is part of my political struggle – creating my own definitions and insisting on the right to express deep down feelings in my own language.
Grace Nicholls (novelist)

The novels which had a potent political influence on me were those of Katherine Suzanne Pritchard, who wrote a political history of Australia in the form of a trilogy – *Roaring Nineties*, *Golden Miles* and *Winged Seeds*. These three novels reflect socialist and feminist values and provided me with my first political perspective on my native land. Set in the Australian gold fields, their central figure, Sally Gough, is a character of heroic proportions. These novels present a very different view from the one usually put forward by Australian men and there is no question which is the more perspicacious and powerful. I wish my English friends would read Katherine Suzanne Pritchard, whose impact so far has been confined to the Antipodes.
Dale Spender (feminist writer)

The Children of Sanchez by Oscar Lewis had a strong political influence on me. I read it at a very formative period in my life when I was living and working in Mexico, and it changed my thinking about the Third World and about the value of family life everywhere. It was a wonderful example of the way a typical poor Mexican family coped by drawing on their own resources and upon mutual support instead of depending upon, or even expecting, state aid. It made me aware that the family is a *natural* organisation and that dependence on government support is not a natural way of living. Nor is it dignified, if you believe, as I do, in personal dignity. Reading *The Children of Sanchez* was a formative experience for me, a book about how people can hold their heads high in spite of their circumstances and environment.
Lady Olga Maitland (pro-Nato campaigner and chair of Families for Defence)

I never read novels. What interests me is *living*. The only kind of reading I have time for these days is historical research for my books because the detail has to be absolutely authentic. As a girl, of course, I suppose I did read novels, romances which I borrowed (rather surreptitiously) from the lending libraries – Ethel M Dell and Bertha Ruck – and when I was a little older my brother introduced me to the classics because he thought me terribly uneducated. So I read the novels of Jane Austen almost at one go. History and romance ... those have always been the most important things in my life.
Barbara Cartland (romantic novelist)

The three volumes which make up the novel *Ditte* by the Danish communist writer Martin Anderson Nexo had a profound effect on me when I first read them 30 years ago. Here was a moving story of the life of a working class woman in the early 20th century, written by a man but with deep understanding. Although Ditte's life is desperately hard, what shines through is her joy in living, and Nexo manages to convey, without propagandising, the message of struggle leading to a better world. A book which deserves to be as well known as Gorki's *The Mother*.
Margaret Woddis (Communist Party full-time worker)

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A book I read in early adolescence which affected the whole of my life afterwards was *Under Fire: The Story of a Squad* by Henri Barbusse, an account, in the form of a novel, of Barbusse's experiences in the trenches during the Great War. It is written 'from below', from the point of view of the ranks rather than the officer class who were responsible for so much of what we read about that war. It is a very powerful, consciously literary piece of writing which stresses war as a gross exploitation of ordinary men and emphasises the *extra* suffering of the ranks, who, as Barbusse puts it, 'made the war with their own hands' and were left to drown in the mud of Flanders. He was one of the founders of the French Communist Party and a leader of the movement of writers and artists against fascism in the 30s. It was this book which first made me feel that if *this* was what modern war was like, then the most important thing in one's life is to prevent it.
Margot Heinemann (Communist writer and literary critic)

I would choose *Superman to Man* by J A Rogers, a history of the American negro which brilliantly exposes and dispels many of the old myths and prejudices about racial inequality. The book takes the form of a debate between a black porter and a white southern 'gentleman' during the course of a train journey through the United States and the debate turns the question of culture and 'civilization'. The porter defends himself by drawing on the long, and long suppressed, history of black civilization and cultural achievement of which the white southerner is ignorant – because his unquestioned assumption is that civilization *is* white civilization. It was a book which changed my perceptions, for I too was ignorant of my own cultural history. I am learning only now what I wish I had been taught at school.
Joanne Campbell (actress, recently in the part of Josephine Baker in *This is My Song* at the Theatre Royal, Stratford E.)

Mary Webb's *Precious Bane* altered my perceptions and attitudes about physical handicap. The heroine, Prue Sarn, living in a remote rural community in the 19th century, is marked as 'different' from other women by her 'book-learning', but more significantly she is physically marked by a hare lip. This is seen by the country people as a sign that she is a witch. Prue Sarn has to learn, slowly and painfully, that she is unacceptable to men and can never expect to marry or bear children.

Today we understand these things better – or think we do. We scorn our superstitious ancestors and less 'civilized' people everywhere – but have we really changed very much? How often have we treated handicapped people as inferior beings, assuming dullness of mind where there is none, and how many of us automatically associate attractiveness of appearance with attractiveness of nature? Prue Sarn at least had one man with the understanding and courage to see her as the person she really was. But this sort of man is still the exception rather than the rule.
Rosie Barnes (Alliance MP for Greenwich)

I've never read anything which has changed my political views. They've always been very strong.
Janice Long (Radio 1 DJ)

I was a soggy liberal – indeed a soggy Young Liberal – when I first read *Germinal* by Zola. More than any political tract could possibly have done, this book firmed, *toughened*, and confirmed me as a socialist. I became quite evangelical for a long time afterwards, pressing copies gratuitously on all my friends and earnestly expounding on the evils of capitalism. Reading *Germinal* was a turning point in my political development and I can't think of another book which has had such an impact.
Brenda Polan (Women's Page editor of *The Guardian*)

I think I would name *Vanity Fair* because of my admiration for Becky Sharpe, her autonomy and amorality. Compared to other novelistic heroines (I was reading the novels of Dickens too) she was wonderfully positive and feminist. I discovered this book on my own and read it for pleasure rather than duty. My mother enrolled me at the local library at the age of about six and I spent most of my childhood and adolescence with my head firmly in a book. But out of all those books *Vanity Fair* remains my favourite as well as the one which first influenced me politically, as a woman.
Dianne Abbott (prospective parliamentary Labour candidate for Hackney and Stoke Newington)

Jane Austen's novels (along with many others) undoubtedly influenced me – but not, I think, in a way which *Marxism Today* would approve! From them I learned that to be good and quiet and self-effacing resulted in getting the man of your choice on the last page ... But there was a book which had a very positive influence, *Mary Barnes; Two Accounts of a Journey* by Mary Barnes and Joseph Berke, a book I read when I was in a bad psychological state and starting analysis. Mary Barnes describes her 'going down' into madness and how, by starting to paint, she began to explore the creative aspects of her personality. Reading this account was an exciting moment for me because it coincided with the discovery of the creative side of myself.
Wendy Cope (poet)

Reading Emile Zola's *Germinal* for the first time was a devastating experience – as it still is. *Germinal* is, for me, the definitive indictment of the viciousness of capital. And I would want to add Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* as the prime example of what happens when society does not allow a woman to explore her own creative possibilities – she ends up as the plaything of an unscrupulous heel. More recently I've been reading Ignazio Silone's *Fontamara*, an unsentimental but intensely moving story about the integrity required to stand up against abuses of power and privilege.
Melanie McFadyean (advice columnist on *Just 17* and writer)

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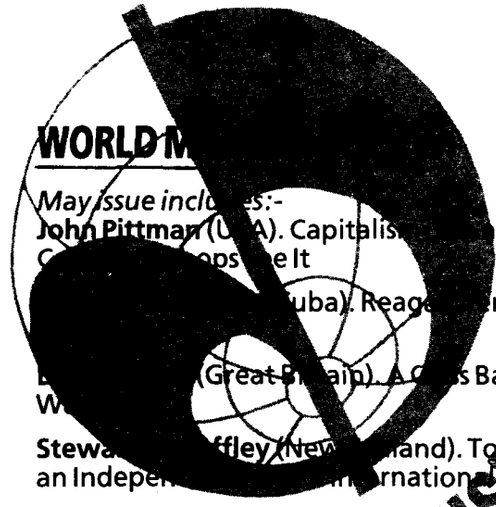

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Fear and Loathing in Gilead

Science fiction is a genre with many possibilities, allowing writers to explore social and political questions outside the constraints of realistic fiction.

Of all the different forms of science fiction, dystopian writing is the one that is most easily accepted into the 'mainstream' canon – unlike its corollary, utopian writing, which tends to be dismissed as fantasy or escapism. Margaret Atwood's **The Handmaid's Tale** *(Jonathan Cape £9.95)* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, and is one of the selected 20 titles for the Feminist Book Fortnight. It is at once poetic and political. Margaret Atwood has closely observed the social forces, including the growth of moral conservatism, from which she extrapolates her future society; and she reincarnates them in vivid and haunting images of suppression, subjugation and fear.

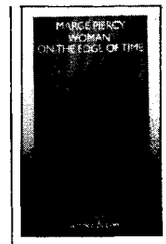
The Handmaid's Tale is set in a near future North American state called Gilead. The constitutional government has been overthrown – all its members killed, church and state are united and the status quo is maintained with the help of a military force called the Angels, and their ubiquitous Eyes, or spies. The birth rate has been severely threatened by an accumulation of poisons, and the circumstances of women's lives have been reduced. In this male supremacist society, women are functionaries only: those who have lived upright and righteous lives are Wives to the Commanders, those who have not passed the test of moral rectitude but who have 'viable ovaries' are Handmaids, and there are Marthas for servants. Low-status men have Econowives. All women are chattels, dressed in a uniform that denotes their function. The Handmaids lack even a name of their own, taking on the name of whichever Commander they are servicing. Punishment for infringement of any of the rules, or for failure in one's allotted function, is drastic; death, or deportation to the planet Colonies, to clear up the toxic waste dumped there.

These fears and concerns have been explored by other women writers. In **Swastika Night** (first published 1937, reissued by *Lawrence & Wishart 1985 £3.95)* Katharine Burdekin posits a Europe after seven centuries of Nazi domination. Women have been reduced to the status of animals, useful only for their procreative functions. In Suzy McKee Charnas' chilling post-nuclear holocaust world in **Walk to the End of the World** *(Gollancz)*, women, animals and non-white men are 'unmen'. Of this category only the women are allowed existence within the Holdfast, again as childbearers, as slaves or pack animals, or as sport for the zombie-like police force. *Marge Piercy* gives us a glimpse of a similar society in **Woman on the Edge of Time** *(The Women's Press)*, where it is shown in contrast to another possible future, a utopian one. Again women are stripped down to function, denied subjecthood.

All these dystopias explore the fear that women's sexuality arouses in men, and the ways that men have of silencing and controlling women's desire. But where Marge Piercy is pragmatic – the central theme of **Woman on the Edge of Time** is the importance of political praxis and the ability of the oppressed to seize control of their own future – Margaret Atwood is more ambivalent. **The Handmaid's Tale** is as much about the search for the absent Mother as it is about the control imposed by the law of the Father. Offred's portrait of her own lost mother, a feminist of the 1970s and 1980s, is ironic, exasperated and eventually affectionate. Margaret Atwood offers no clear victory over Gilead, but the utopian element – and all these dystopias hide a utopian spark – is revealed as Offred constructs a subjecthood for herself. She allows the forces of the unconscious to speak: irrationality over order, sexual desire over anatomical function. Out of the silence comes autonomous speech. Science fiction offers a forum for women to explore their fears as well as their dreams.

It is encouraging to see mainstream writers, and particularly writers of such quality as Margaret Atwood, exploiting its potential. ●

Sarah Lefanu



Languages Of Resistance

Nineteenth century women's writing is not often read critically as containing statements about the multiple forms of oppression and resistance.

A liberal tradition assigns women's novels to a 'cultural, private and domestic' space, and sees the novel as primarily an exploration of character rather than a highly condensed, symbolic narrative about the relationship between social and psychic conditions. It asks us to read Austen, Bronte, Eliot, in terms of the individual fate of its female heroines only. Certain strands of feminist criticism reinforce this emphasis by highlighting the drama of sexual difference and gender relations at the expense of the other elements of the narrative.

Jane Eyre is a classic example. What should we make of Lady Eastlake's famous judgement of this novel in the *Quarterly Review* of 1849? 'We do not hesitate to say. that the tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered chartism and rebellion at home, is that same which has also written **Jane Eyre**.'

Charlotte Bronte was no political radical, and **Jane Eyre,** though it exposes the brutal hypocrisies of Victorian charity, does not deal with industrial or urban unrest. Its romantic resolution is often seen as undermining even its expressive demand for a wider sphere for women and a less biased view of their psychic lives. Yet it was impossible in the late 1840s to write about the rebellion and rage of women without making, explicitly or implicitly, the connection between their grievance and that of the 'people'.

In a deeply ambiguous passage, Bronte centres that connection. Jane meditates that 'it is in vain to say that human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility; they must have action and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses which people earth.'

Here is an appropriation of a contemporary revolutionary language in terms which validate revolt and rebellion against oppression. It argues for the naturalness of female 'action' in terms of the naturalness of a universal male right to rebel; making precisely the kind of rhetorical allusion to class resistance that outraged Lady Eastlake.

However, the novel also warns against the kind of rebellion and excess which leads to insanity and incarceration via the stigmatised figure of Rochester's mad, nymphomaniac, colonial wife. And as Jane flees the aristocratic mansion to preserve her bourgeois, protestant virtue she becomes transformed into another threatening element of the contemporary mob – the female vagrant who must be shut out to preserve the class purity of genteel women.

The literally composite identity of 'women' and 'masses' in this passage highlights the ways in which the novel makes powerful symbolic statement, which its happy ending cannot really efface, about the intimate connection between forms of oppression. ●

Cora Kaplan

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Tactical Tangles

Britain stands on the eve of a general election in which, for Labour and Communist parties alike, the central issue is the replacement of the disastrous Thatcher government by a Labour government. It is obvious that in the little time remaining it will require a very great effort to convince a sufficient number of electors that such a Labour vicory is both desirable and possible.

Unfortunately, even before such an effort has been seriously made, Eric Hobsbawm has concluded, despite the volatility of the electorate, that such a desirable outcome is so 'extremely unlikely' that an alternative objective should be set. The 'essential task' of the defeat of the Thatcher government, he argues in last month's *Marxism Today*, requires us 'in every constituency, to vote for the candidate who offers the best chance of beating the Tories, whether Labour or Alliance.'

I shall seek to show that this enticingly attractive arithmetical logic obscures serious political considerations which should lead socialists to reject the whole tactical voting argument along with the perspective of a coalition government related to it.

Eric Hobsbawm is motivated, like all of us, by concern to save the country from the appalling prospect of a third Thatcher government. It is, however, by no means clear that tactical voting would contribute to this. It would appear equally possible that the increased Alliance parliamentary representation, to which Eric accepts that this policy would contribute, would be used to prop up or participate in a Thatcher-led government if there were a hung parliament. Certainly recent statements by David Owen indicate that this would be the more congenial option for him. While the Alliance comprises a variety of elements, Owen, as leader of the SDP, is far from being alone in being closer ideologically to the Tories than to Labour. The *Financial Times* has aptly described SDP policies as 'Thatcherism with a human face'. As for the more pragmatic Alliance leaders, their criterion will surely be what in any given situation will best promote the fortunes of the Alliance, which seeks to displace Labour as Britain's second party.

Eric himself accepted, at the press conference on his article, that his proposals involved a gamble. For my book the risks are too great and the price too high for socialists to pay.

Since 1979 one of the most positive developments in British politics has been the ending of the former cross-party commitment to the nuclear bomb. Labour's adoption of anti-nuclear policies was a major reason for the SDP's breakaway. It is of the greatest political importance that Labour should be pushed to campaign for those policies against the nuclear commitments of both the Tories and the Alliance.

Martin Kettle, whose article in the same issue complements Eric's, seeks to establish bases for a rapprochement between the Labour Party and the Alliance. The contrast between the former's non-nuclear and the latter's nuclear policy, he writes, is 'becoming increasingly blurred by the Labour Party as the general election nears'. Such a tendency on the part of Kinnock and Co. is – alas – there for all to see. It also constitutes, of course, a perceptible blurring of the differences between the Labour leaders and Thatcher on this vital issue. The point for the Left is surely to oppose a craven retreat by Labour from its policy commitments rather than to approve a drift back to the right on the factually correct but politically unacceptable grounds that it would help to promote reconciliation with the Alliance.

The same applies to the crucial issue of repealing Thatcher's anti-trade union legislation, with which the Alliance is essentially in agreement but which Labour is committed to repeal, and to Labour's plans for social ownership.

These are not just three issues where there are differences between Labour and the Alliance to be weighed against a greater number of other issues where their policies may appear similar. They are issues of prime importance affecting world peace, democratic rights and the control of the economy respectively. The difference in policy commitments on these issues of Labour and the Alliance are so fundamental as to make general cooperation extremely dubious except at the price of a Labour fudge which would be extremely undesirable.

Two of Eric Hobsbawm's greatest strengths as a Marxist – his profound knowledge of history and the exceptionally strong international dimension in his thinking – may on this occasion have clouded his perception of what is specific in the British situation today.

Thus he seems to be reasoning by analogy with the French Popular Front, casting the Alliance in the role of the French Radicals, with whom the Socialists and Communists agreed to desist in the second round of the 1936 elections in favour of whichever of their candidates had done best in the first round. Like Eric, I have defended, and continue to defend, the Popular Front experience of the 1930s against the traditional Trotskyist and leftist criticisms. The situation in Britain today is however, manifestly different.

Firstly, because politics in the 1930s were dominated by the fascist threat endangering all democratic liberties and organisations. Bad and authoritarian as Thatcherism is, that is not the position today, and Eric is not of course suggesting that it is. Faced with the danger of fascism, French Socialists, Communists and bourgeois democratic Radicals concluded an agreement on the basis of which, having won an electoral majority, an anti-fascist Popular Front government was formed. No such basis for an agreement exists between Labour and Alliance today.

Secondly, under the British electoral system there is no first round to show us which party is best placed to beat the Tory in any given constituency and Eric makes no suggestions as to how we should determine this. Should Labour and Communist in Greenwich, for instance, support the Alliance, which recently – helped by anti-Labour tactical voting – captured this traditional Labour seat, rather than seeking to win it back? And could we really expect that Alliance supporters would apply the same criterion and vote Labour in all those constituencies with sitting Labour MPs? While Eric would clearly like his appeal to be followed by both Alliance and Labour supporters, he should as a realist recognise that *in practice* it is liable to contribute to lowering the level of Labour and Communist campaigning for their candidates and increasing the Alliance's vote at the expense of Labour's. Apart from other factors, it is mainly potential Labour voters who will have read his article.

'Owen, as a leader of the SDP, is far from being alone in being closer ideologically to the Tories than to Labour.'

Eric Hobsbawm is undoubtedly right that the Alliance must be recognised as an important third force in British politics, a fact to which Labour for too long failed to face up. To do so does not, I would contend, require a rapprochement between Labour and the Alliance which is only possible at the cost of a watering down of Labour's distinctive policies. This would only contribute to bringing about Thatcher's declared objective of eliminating a left party with socialist aims as a major force in British politics and producing an Amer-

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ican-type scenario.

Rather Labour should recognise the Alliance as a serious challenge and campaign boldly and intelligently to win over the millions now supporting it for left and socialist policies. It should work to help them identify the broad interests of the middle strata, to which so many of them belong, with the labour and trade union movement against which the SDP has sought consciously to incite them. It would, of course, be leftist foolishness to assume that this would necessarily bring quick returns. The development of a new socialist hegemony is a long and difficult process, but one to which Marxists have a special responsibility to help the labour movement address itself. Such a project is hardly promoted by treating as frozen the consciousness of electors in constituencies where past or even present criteria suggest that the Alliance enjoys more support than Labour. What it requires is surely that socialists should use the increased opportunities provided by a general election to challenge and change those views.

'A Labour-led coalition,' writes Eric Hobsbawm, is an 'entirely acceptable option for the Alliance'. Under certain circumstances it may well be. But would, and should, it under those circumstances be equally acceptable to Labour?

Let us not forget that the road to Thatcherism was paved by the wretched experience of right-wing Labour governments, including the period of the Lib-Lab pact of 1977-8. A Labour-Alliance coalition could be expected to pursue policies which are more rather than less right wing and result in even greater discontent and alienation among important sections of the working people than did Callaghan's government. The danger is that if Labour were to enter such a coalition operating in that manner it would discredit itself and create the basis for another terrible right-wing backlash, to which it might find itself even less able to mobilise effective resistance.

The most important thing if Labour does not obtain a majority would probably be for it to preserve its independence and that of the working class movement as a whole and mobilise to defend the interests of the working people and win support for its alternative policies. However, it would be wrong to reject the possibility of negotiations with the Alliance and the nationalist parties in a hung parliament where Labour was strong enough to reach tactical agreements with them to block reactionary Tory legislation or even, though more improbably, to enable Labour to take office with the chance of carrying out a progressive programme, on which it would be prepared, if faced with parliamentary obstruction, to go to the country to obtain a clear majority. ●

Monty Johnstone

A speech by the Communist Party general secretary Gordon McLennan to the party's executive committee on the general election, which covers the issue of tactical voting, is being published in the June issue of the party's bulletin, News and Views.

Mythical Divide

Tactical voting already exists. Having hauled themselves up the lower slopes over the past 25 years, Liberals have had to utilise it at every conceivable opportunity to combat the class bias of the defective electoral system. Having now established themselves in handy positions to challenge for the summit the Alliance will use tactical voting arguments as persuasively as possible.

It is not, however, particularly healthy for the democratic process. One of the most serious indictments against the 'first past the post' voting system is its encouragement of negative voting. Being able to vote against the government, or against labour, enables the British public to opt out of any semblance of vigorous political thought. Compared to other democratic countries the level of interest in political ideas and values is depressingly low. By concentrating attention on the party or candidate one dislikes most, tactical voting fosters this British disease.

If tactical voting were to become legitimised as an acceptable part of the democratic process we would, in fact, have acquired the old French system but without the advantages of the first ballot. Proportional representation's key effect would be to lift the quality of debate and to force the political parties to present themselves very differently to the all too superficial methods they can currently get away with. The single transferable vote enables far more sophisticated tactical voting to take place.

But what about the current election? For Liberals, and for the Alliance, two key points stand out which fatally flaw the argument for tactical voting as advanced by Eric Hobsbawm. Firstly, it accepts as given a 'progressive reactionary' spectrum which assumes that because Thatcherism is so clearly divisive, dangerous and embittering then Labourism is therefore preferable.

As a bare assumption, as it stands, it is intellectually unsustainable without examination. It assumes, for instance, that one's view of the economic system, with its concomitant acceptance that the end justifies the means, is still the only valid political determinant.

I reject that view utterly. Nothing is more conducive to continuing the debilitating strife between the employed and the unemployed, the tenant and the owner-occupier, or the north and the south, than to believe that what one has or can get matters more than what one is. Liberals see people as members of a community rather than of a class and consequently place the primary emphasis on the linkages between individuals in geographic communities as the means of exercising political power.

It is no benefit to the security and stability of our society for the Conservatives to write off cynically some 20% of our fellow citizens or for the Labour Party deliberately to screw a different 20% at the other extreme. Such attitudes lead rapidly to the politics of violence.

My second objection follows directly from the first. The prevailing assumption behind the tactical voting campaign is that anti-Conservative votes somehow belong by right to the Labour Party and it is only by some inexplicable aberration that the Alliance is the major challenger to the Tories in many seats. This arrogant view stems from the dominant economistic view of politics that is the major handicap to new political thinking in Britain.

The evidence of Labour in urban local government is alarming. There is a sophisticated and deliberate political corruption that is intolerable and unsupportable. The employment of Labour activists in key council jobs; the blurring of the distinction between elected members and paid officials; the use of grant-aid to enhance Labour-dominated voluntary groups and to inhibit others; and the attempt to obscure all this by the production and distribution of political propaganda on the rates, suggests that intrinsically Labour is no more worthy of support than are Conservatives. If the electorate was aware of what is happening in Labour local government, and understood the cruciality of maintaining political pluralism, they would feel the same. The Alliance is getting that message across.

For us the real political divide is between corporatism – of Right or of Left – and the genuine spreading of power. Tactical voting may well aid that division in the short term but it will not do so by blindly suggesting that it has only a one-sided aim. ●

Michael Meadowcroft MP

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UPDATE

ART WORKS

Continuing our occasional look at the strength of local arts.

Painting Women
Feminist art historian Deborah Cherry selects works by Victorian women artists. The exhibition explores how women artists related to their subject matter – and how women were depicted as subject matter.
☛Rochdale Art Gallery until May 30 and on tour – details 0706-342154.

La Lucha
The Spanish for struggle – a new exhibition of political posters and photographs illustrates the struggles of the people of Latin America following a nine month research tour by Carol Walker and Phil Cope of Valley and Vale Community Arts.
☛Bookings: Valley and Vale Community Arts, Blaengarw Workmen's Hall, Blaengraw, South Wales CF32 8AW.

Bazaar
A new quarterly magazine covering South Asian arts. Well laid out and designed, the first issue looks at the Roundhouse affair and interviews Indian dancer Shobana Jeyasingh.
☛Subscriptions £5 for 4 issues inc. p&p from Diorama Arts, 18 Park Sq East, London NW1.

Mariana Pineda
The multi-racial women's theatre company, *Loose Change*, in a new production of Lorca's thriller. Mariana Pineda was betrayed in her struggle against oppression in Granada in 1831 but became a legend.
☛Oval House Theatre, SE11 until June 7. 01-582 7680.

Tales From The Spring Shop
Margaret Barraclough, Jean Clark and Sheila Lee were crane drivers in the Sheffield steelworks in the 70s and used to leave rhyming notes for each other between shifts. Funny and raw – these poems show what it's like to be a woman on the shopfloor.
☛£1 from Sheffield Popular Publishing. 0742-681 867.

TSWA 3D: Holly Warburton
As part of the transformation of nine national sites, Holly Warburton transforms the neo-classical Oratory in Liverpool with a tape/slide show that ranges from Prince to the poetry of Baudelaire.
☛Until June 20, Oratory, St James' Cemetery, Liverpool.

Positions
An exhibition of photography that questions the traditional use of perspective to create space. Instead, Clare Charnley, Stephen Lawson and Lynn Silverman have learnt from Japanese and Chinese ways of seeing.
☛June 6-July 4, Impressions Gallery of Photography, 17 Colliergate, York.

Spokesong
A new production of this delightful musical play by Stewart Parker which overflows with passion in its advocacy of bicycle power.
☛From June 2, Stephen Joseph Theatre, Valley Bridge Parade, Scarborough.

Boyd Webb
Boyd Webb's large colour photographs portray a world threatened by pollution, nuclear war and sudden destruction. His techniques combine the concerns of the painter with the skills of the photographer.
☛Until June 21, Whitechapel Art Gallery, Whitechapel High St, London E1.

NEWS

Living Without Cruelty
A unique exhibition which draws together organisations opposed to violence against humans, animals and the environment. A celebration of cruelty free living.
☛June 19-21, Kensington Town Hall, London W8.

Viva Cuba!
Gordon McLennan and Tricia Davis of the Communist Party have just returned from the land of salsa and socialism. Meetings now being arranged.
☛Details: Margaret Woddis 01 251 4406.

Women's Video Festival
The first national event of this kind is to be held in London this October. It will provide a forum for presently under-represented work to be seen and aims to reflect the diversity of women's video. Women should apply now if they wish to enter tapes.
☛Details: Women's Video Festival, c/o Women's Media Resource Project, 85 Kingsland High St, London E8.

History Workshop
A seminar of socialist and feminist historians. This month Bob Scribner talks on 'Popular Magic and Witchcraft in 16th century Germany'.
☛7pm, June 1, The White Swan, 14 New Row, London WC2.

The Housing Game
Help is needed to set up a game on housing in aid of Shelter in Bristol. The ideal chance to build your own home!
☛Details: Ian 0272-558726.

20 Years of the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza
A conference organised by the *Palestine Post* to discuss the prospects for peace in the Middle East and the effects of the current situation on the economy, human rights and the women's movement. A fundraising social for Medical Aid for Palestinians in the evening.
☛June 6, Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Ave, London WC2.

CFEPI
Public meeting organised by the Committee for the Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis to protest at recent attacks on the press and freedom of expression by the Israeli authorities. Speakers from the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem (now closed) and members of the Israeli delegation to Roumania (now on trial).
☛June 23, 7:30pm, at Westminster Friends House, 52 St Martins Lane WC2.

Sandino Carnival
Dance away pre-election blues at the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign's recreation of a Latin carnival with music from top DJs Giles Petersen, Baz fe Jaz, Mark Moore and Simon Booth.
☛June 4, Electric Ballroom, Camden NW1.

Women's Residential Assertiveness Workshop
This weekend course will enable women to come together in relaxed surroundings to learn about themselves and their relations with others. Tutor from the Redwood Women's Training Association.
☛June 19-21, Conway, North Wales. Contact Pat Gail 0492-593-033.

Men
In association with *Marxism Today*, Breaking Out present a day event on sexual politics for the nineties. Speakers include Ken Livingstone, Frank Mort and Cynthia Cockburn.
☛9.30am, June 20, Caxton House, St John's Way, London N4. Tickets £4 or £2.

Apartheid: I Won't Buy It
National Campaign for peoples sanctions, initiated by the Communist Party. Will run throughout the summer. For details contact your local Communist Party on 01 251 4406.

PUBLICATIONS

State Benefits
The annual guide to state benefits has been fully updated to help those who are not claiming the benefits to which they are entitled.
☛£1 from Labour Research Dept 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1.

Women in Revolutionary Russia
Cathy Porter – biographer of Alexandra Kollontai – looks at the role of women in the making of the revolution. One of a series of school books, aimed at the 14-18 age group, reviewing women's history.
☛£2.95, Cambridge University Press.

Pacific Women Speak
A collection of speeches by women from the Pacific. They reveal the exploitation of the military and the missionary and emphasise that it is women who always suffer – 'Why haven't you known for forty years what's happening?'
☛£1.95 from Green Line, 34 Cowley Rd, Oxford OX4.

Charter for Jobs 87
Geoffrey Goodman's Charter calls for decisive action in reducing unemployment without creating inflation.
☛£1 from Employment Institute, Southbank Hse, Black Prince Rd, London SE1.

Poverty – the Facts
Nearly a third of all children in Britain are living on the margins of poverty, reveals a new report. Increasingly the burden of poverty is being borne by the family with children, rather than singles or the elderly.
☛Available from Child Poverty Action Group, 4th floor, 1-5 Bath St, London EC1V, £1.

Entries for Update should be sent to the office. For information: tel Nick Mirzoeff on 01-673 3450. Please try to ensure you give details of disabled access.

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M·T HEARTS

For love, lust or laid-back companionship. To those according to their need.

● **Left in and out.** Male 34, single, Irish, working class. Likes music, travel, Chaplin, sport, rambling and honesty. would-be poet, other half, militant, happy; none of these nearly. Seeks socialist lady, who enjoys the ups and accepts the downs, for friendly relationship. London area. Box 075.

● **39 year old woman** with spirit and tenderness seeks single man with intuition, verve, and warmth. Unsupported father welcome. London area. Box 076.

● **Clark Kent like creature** on Tyneside seeks a female with a brain for relationship. Box 077.

● **Young** S.E. London gay guy searching for good-looking black guy for close relationship. My interests: clubbing, politics, running, cinema, etc., Give it a try. Photo appreciated. ALA. Box 078.

● **New job,** new area, male looking for new woman friends, new intellectual and physical stimuli. I enjoy films, concerts, running, mountaineering, literature, etc. I am a very fit 39. Kendal based, can travel. Box 079.

● **30 year old,** middle eastern origin, marxist, extremely understanding, not very outgoing but could be convinced. Looking for a loving, kind and stable relationship. Box 080.

● **Hot horny dude** seeks similar for safe adventures. Ancient instincts, but fresh approach from East London radical skinhead. Any nationality, or either sex, but no Timotei look-alikes. Box 081.

● **Goil likes ghoul.** Gramsci, groundnuts and big goolies, all advantages. Box 082.

● **Socialist Chinese,** ex-journalist, post-grad, 30's wants international lady for more than mundane concerns. But capable of frivolity too. Central London. Box 083.84.

● **Soulful, introspective** yet sometimes lively (even humorous), presentable male, 29, wide interests, seeks sympathetic woman. Ideally: friendly, sincere, talkative. Photo appreciated. London based Northern exile. Box 085.

● **Attractive woman,** 45, professional, is looking for socialist male for fun, love and commitment. Wirral-Merseyside. Box 086.

● **Tall businessman (45)** seeks slim, shortish, young guty for safe 1:1 relationship. Nice London home write in confidence. I'll send you my photo. Box 087.

● **Man, 29,** single, 6' tall medium built who is friendly, sincere and caring seeks female for friendship/relationship. Box 088.

● **Are you an unattached,** clever, lovely socialist man about 55? Are you looking for a woman of similar age with a lively body and mind, strong but gentle of good, stylish appearance? If so, please write. It could be beautiful. Box 089.

● **Shy male, 21** seeks female companion. North-west, anywhere? Box 090.

● **Gay** East Sussex male (21) who is lonely and depressed seeks friends. Box 091.

● **Cambridge PhD** scientist, 24, seeks attractive suspendered female 18-35 for intense physical and metal stimulation. Box 092.

● **Attractive woman** seeks active man for interesting encounters. Write for action – Birmingham(!). Box 093.

● **Dull Dumfries** where Burns collected tax, is now the home of someone with similar appetites. Well, actually the egalitarianism is running thin, the whisky has been swopped for Perrier and I prefer men. Me: spunky and blonde, female and less than discrete. Take the high road . . . Box 094.

● **Libertarian Marxist,** male, 41, divorced, unemployed, Ph.D., wide-ranging interests, unprejudiced; seeks female pen-friend(s). Box 095.

HOLIDAYS

● **Mountains Southern Spain.** Explore glorious countryside and moorish towns on bike, horse, minibus, train. Relax at converted watermill with pool. Molina del Santo, 29 Lordswood W Road, Southampton. 0703 768851.

● **Journey Latin America** Low cost flights, holiday journeys, 3-6 weeks. JLA, 16 Devonshire Road, London W4 2HD. 01-747 3108.

● **Brighton.** Send S.A.E. for weekend activities programme and details of ideal conference/meeting place. Sleeps 17+ Cheap and cheerful with all facilities. TOAL-Con, 39 St Aubyns, Hove, BN3 2TH (0273) 24739.

● **Nepal & Tibet** Trekking adventures led by Sherpa Co-operative, for individuals, families, mixed or women's groups. SAE Adventure Trekking, 40 Queens Park Court, Edinburgh, EH8 7DX.

M·T PLAYGROUND

Election time, and the party agenda should include cocktails, and whether James Brown really does sound better on Compact Disc. Why not share your enjoyment of the good life with other M.T. afficianados?

● **BAD . . .** funk nights in The Sanctuary at Heaven on Friday nights. Only £4. M.T. club-goers, mainly gay but mixed.

● **Bennets,** Glassford Street, Glasgow. Gay, but gallus.

● **Brittania Leisure Centre,** Hackney for weightlifting and bodybuilding. Marxism Today readers stretch more than their minds. Join us there.

M·T POSITIONS

● **Experienced journalist** seeks work for lefty groups. Cheap rates for good, punchy copy. 041-632 6501.

● **South Wales – Partner Wanted:** Challenging post in Glyncorrwg, West Glamorgan to replace outgoing partner in 2-doctor practice; from mid-Autumn. Teaching and research orientated practice with own computer and A4 records; Attached staff with full range of usual equipment. MRC unit based in practice with outgoing partner, Dr J.T. Hart, continuing as research registrar. Some general practice experience is desirable as incoming partner will be functioning single-handed. Immediate financial parity with 12 month probationary period. Apply with curriculum vitae and three referees to: Dr B. Gibbons MRCGP, 39 Villiers Road, Blaengwynfi, Port Talbot, West Glamorgan, SA13 3TH.

ACCOMMODATION

● **Young couple** seek London flat from mid-June. Phone Oxford 53315.

● **Interested in non-violence,** meditation, simple living, feminism? Mixed community seeks new members. Write to: Enquirers Secretary, Some Friends Community, Bethnal Green Road, London E2 6DG.

● **Clays Lane** is a large, multi-racial, single person housing co-op looking for new members. Welcome gays, heteros, lesbians and all creeds. Write: membership Secretary c/o 11, Taylor Court, Clays Lane Housing Co-op, Clays Lane, Stratford, London E15 2EL, including S.A.E.

M·T POCKETS

● **Hammer and sickle jumpers.** Black lambswool with red motif. Loose fitting. S.M.L. £24.99 plus £1.50 p+p. Jill Setterington, Software Knitted Garments, 6 Ashville View, Leeds, LS6 1LT. Tel: 0532 788837.

● **Eat The Rich T-shirts,** £5.99 inc., Red/White, c/o 176 Victoria Park Rd, London E9.

● **tHAtcHA.** This joke is killing us. Big black T-shirts. £5 inc p/p. Marston, Little Foxley, Charmouth, Dorset.

M·T HANDS

● **Socialist solicitor** can provide range of legal services at fair rate for his labour. Lloyd Tucker. Nottingham (0602) 256532/297463.

● **The Typing Pool** – a woman's co-operative. Professional low cost typing of articles, thesis, letters etc, from script or tape. Translation and typing of French, German, Spanish and Italian. Central London. Tel: 01-837 1489.

● **Buzz Builders** (common ownership Co.). General building repairs. We specialise in loft and studio conversions. Business number now 01 674 701 2.

● **Word-processing for writers.** Fast – professional. £2.50 per 1000 words. Business services also. Tel: 0202 37743 (24 hrs).

● **Carpentry,** decorating in the London area. Good rates, free estimate. Chris 01-720 0260 eves/weekends.

● **Material Word Unit 53,** 16-20 George Street, Moseley, Birmingham B12 9RG. Tel: 021-4401977. Translations, Interpreting, Foreign Language Research and Resources.

● **Painting,** decorating, shelving, high quality at reasonable rates, free estimates. North London area. Ring Dominick, 01-254 4556.

● **Socialist Interior** and exterior decorator. Top quality, good rates, free estimate. London area. Ring Clive 01-735 4012.

● **Space for new partnership of photographers.** The services we offer include fashion, theatre, editorial, photography and studio hire. Studio or location we remain competitive throughout. Ring us today for appointments or advice. Ken or Chris: 01-251 6037/278 9785.

M·T BOOKSHELVES

The essential booksellers guide.

● **Hammersmith Books** Famous for out-of-print books. Over 100,000 titles from left to right. A worldwide mail order service since 1948. And we buy your old books. 01-876 7254 (24 hrs). Barnes High St, London SW13 9LR.

● **Collets International Shop,** 129-131 Charing Cross Rd, London WC2H 0EQ. Tel: 01-734 0782/3.
British books, journals and pamphlets: fiction, languages (incl. EFL), politics, economics, social sciences, labour, trade union and peace movement. Literature, teaching aids, travel, art books, sheet music and records from the USSR and Eastern Europe. Folk records and songbooks. Political posters, badges, cards and T-Shirts.

● **Collets Penguin Bookshop,** 64-66 Charing Cross Rd, London WC2H 0BD. Tel: 01-836 6306. Most Penguins, Pelicans in print. Secondhand section. Social science, reference, travel, cookery books, the best of modern fiction from other publishers.

● **Collets Chinese Bookshop,** 40 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PJ. Tel: 01-580 7538.
Books in Chinese and English from and about China. Chinese language aids. Oriental art books. Traditional Chinese embroideries, antiques, prints, jewellery, porcelain and embroideries.

● **Bookmarks,** 265 Seven Sisters Rd, N4. North London's leading socialist bookshop. Two floors of good books and pamphlets.

● **Central Books,** 37 Grays Inn Road, WC1. Large selection of books on Marxism, Feminism, Third World, Industrial Relations, Politics, Fiction. Also a selection of second-hand books, posters, cards, badges and a mail-order service. Tel: 01-242 6166. Sale starts March 7th.

● **Books on Socialism** and labour movement. 2nd hand list available for s.a.e. from Northern Herald Books, c/o 6 Edmund St., Bradford 5.

● **For a list** of radical bookshops in Britain send s.a.e. to: **Federation of Radical Booksellers,** c/o Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, London, N1 9DX.

PUBLICATIONS

● **Gay Scotland** reflects lesbian, gay and bisexual thought and activity in Britain and overseas. Buy from 'Gays the Word' or other Left Bookshops, or subscribe £5/5 issues: 58A Broughton Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3SA, Sample £1.50.

● **Radical Scotland.** Scotland's top political magazine, bi-monthly. 70p. 40pp. Socialism; radicalism; Home Rule. Annual subscriptions £5.40. From 48 The Pleasance, Edinburgh, EH8 9TJ.

● **Gay Life.** The fizziest gay magazine in Britain. Monthly from your local pub or

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bookshop. Subscriptions £9 12 months. Ring 061 236 6026.

● **Common Sense.** Scotland's new magazine for theory and practice. The weapon of critique and the critique of the weapon. £2, s.a.e. Richard Gunn, 13 Northumberland Street, Edinburgh.

PUBLISHERS

● **Socialist Publisher.** Cheap, professional publishing service. Author-financed booklets (poetry, *political pamphlets, etc.*) to a high quality. Coventry 23128.

FITNESS

● **Bodybuilding.** The psychological benefits can outweigh the physical ones. Generate confidence and a sense of physical control. Stretch yourself. Its for everyone. We offer home courses for all ages and both sexes; including full fitness programmes with exercise diagrams – one, two or three month courses available. Send cheque or postal order for £5, £6 or £7 respectively, plus 50p postage to MRC Fitness Studio Ltd. 83 New Street, Dalry, Ayrshire, KA24 5BY.

CYCLES

● **Brixton Cycle . . . Co-op.** Open 6 days a week 10-6. Ritzy end of Coldharbour Lane. new and used cycles, fast repairs. Large range of accessories and special offers. 433 Coldharbour Lane, SW9. 01-733 6055.

● **Mosquito Bikes.** For sales, spares and fast repairs; and very friendly staff. A workers co-operative, no less. Phone 01-249 7915.

M·T SUITCASES

● **Women's moves.** Reliable, friendly, professional moves. Free quotes: 01-733 3519 or 400 8446.

EATING OUT

● **Orexi Restaurant.** Greek Food to Take Away. Fully Licensed for parties. Recommended by many M.T. Readers Groups. 236 Hornsey Road, London N7 7LL. Telephone 01/607 7098.

THERAPY

● **Therapy:** Psycho-politics? Psycho-analysis study group. Central London. Box T001.

CONFERENCES

● **Need a venue** for your meeting/conference? Special rates for charities/educational groups. Comprehensive, economical facilities in WC1. Meeting rooms, catering and bars, audio-visual. Contact Amanda Rumley, University of London union, Malet Street, London WC1. 01-580 9551.

LESBIAN & GAY

● **Lesbian and Gay readers.** Send s.a.e. for booklists to Box M.T., Lavendar Menace Bookshops, 11a Forth Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3LE.

COMPUTERS

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IN MEMORY

Donovan Gardner – much loved comrade died on 25 March at the age of 86. More than fifty years in the Party. Remembered with love by the Bromley family.

MISCELLANEOUS

● **Left wing pamphlets** and periodicals bought for cash. Also interested in buying libraries of left wing material. Ring 01-439 2059.

● **Ruth First Memorial Trust** is presently cataloguing the papers of the late Ruth First. We should be grateful if anybody with relevant material, especially personal correspondence from Ruth herself, could contact: Ruth First Memorial Trust, c/o The Old Manor House, Manor Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

LATE ITEMS

● **Essential merchandise** from Central Committee Outfitters. Still available? MT Mondrian Mug £1.95; Soviet Badge pack £4.95; Gramsci Poster £4.49; Marbeline Lenin and Marx Busts: Small £4.95; Large Lenin £6.95; *Large Bronze-like Lenin* £9.95; M.T. Day-Glo Bike Bag Orange or Green £4; Duvet Cover £30; M.T. pen £2.95; Karl & Groucho T-shirt £5. P&P add 10%. Orders to C.C.O., M.T., FREEPOST, 16 St John Street, London EC1R 1JB. p.s. we also sell a magazine . . .

● **Looking for Monty Python.** Wanted: respondents to help with audience research on comedy. Tel 0442 59852 (eves).

● **'Gramsci and Us'** by Stuart Hall. A recording of Stuart Hall's speech to the Gramsci '87 Conference is now available. The recording lasts for 1 hour and is available on tape. Send a cheque for £3.50 payable to Marxism Today to: Marxism Today Tape Offer, 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY.

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MARXISM TODAY EVENTS

Marxism Today events are now being planned all over Britain. If you would like advice on how to mount one in your town or college then write to us at Marxism Today (Events), 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY. Same address for our readers groups – want to discuss this issue with open-minded non-sectarian friends? Then just enquire how to set up a groupo; or where your nearest one is.

● **Glasgow** Marxism Today Discussion Group meetings continue after the election. Further details: Charlie McInally, 147 Churchill Drive, Broomhill, Glasgow. G11. Tel: (041) 339 4422.

● **South Croydon:** Marxism Today recently formed. For details, phone Glenn (01) 680 0072.

● **Birmingham:** Britain's second city is now preparing for its second Left Unlimited style event. To be held on Saturday October 17th, help is particularly needed with organising workshops and debates. Like to make the big time? Contact Brum Unlimited, 25 Essex St Birmingham 5. Tel: (021) 692 1765.

● **North London:** Women-only Marxism Today Readers Group. Contact Sioned on 01 965 7482 or 01 609 4218.

● **Kensington and Chelsea:** Marxism Today Discussions postponed until after the election. First post-election analysis meeting Wednesday July 1st, 8pm at Imperial College. Details from Brian Nicholls, Tel: (01) 229 7456.

● **Plymouth:** Marxism Today's left Unlimited in the Autumn. If you would like to help contact Nick Hubbard, Pillaton Cottage, Pillaton, Cornwall. Tel: (0579) 50074.

● **Manchester, Greater Manchester:** Marxism Today's Women Alive. To be held in the Salford area in the Autumn. Ideas and help most welcome. Please do get in touch with Jane, 1 Torbay Rd, Chorlton, Manchester. Tel: (061) 861 0985.

● **Teeside:** New group recently formed, for details of forthcoming activities contact: Andy Croft, 13 Emerson Avenue, Middlesborough, Cleveland TS5 7QW.

● **St Albans.** Gramsci Today, an event organised by St Albans Communist Party in association with Marxism Today, on Saturday October 31, at St Albans Town Hall. Further details from Sid Foggerty, 364 London Rd, St Albans, Tel: (0727) 23677.

● **Lewisham:** Vibrant and stimulating Marxism Today Discussion Group. Last Sunday in every month. May 31st: Tactical Voting and the General Election. Interested? Ring Debbie – 635 8661.

CLASSIFIED RATES

- Lineage: 50p per word, except where otherwise stated.
- Semi-display: £7 per column centimetre

Add 15% VAT to all total prices.

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16th of June 1987

Further Enquiries and late copy: telephone Malcolm 01-608 0265.

Box Number entries and replies are strictly confidential. Mark entries 'Left in Love' or 'Left at Play', and replies with the appropriate Box No. on the envelope. Please enclose a stamp for postage costs.

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Raúl Alfonsín

When Raúl Alfonsín was asked what he hoped to achieve as President of Argentina, he replied that his proudest day would be when he handed over the presidency to another elected civilian. It will be no mean achievement, if he does it, and it is as well to bear in mind that it has never yet been done in Argentina.

Yet, there is now a stirring of doubt about when exactly Alfonsín will hand over and what sort of democracy it will be when he does.

Up to now, he has appeared as a kind of uncle-hero. Born in the unpromising surroundings of Chascomus, son of a shopkeeper and lifelong supporter of the Radical Party, Alfonsín seemed one of the men in Argentine politics least likely to be president. He was elected a congressman in 1958, but never made it to any position of importance in the two Radical administrations which followed. In 1972 he founded a dissident minority faction within the crumbling Radical Party, dedicated to modernising the party and rejecting the political style of the Radical *caudillo*, Ricardo Balbín. He was pushed out for his impertinence and not re-elected in 1973. During the turbulent 1970s he was politically in the cold, but established a reputation as a man whose principles led him to acts which the prudent considered foolhardy in the extreme.

'The tragedy is that Alfonsín has fallen off the tightrope, although the crowd has not yet noticed'

It was in this period that his credentials as a defender of human rights were established. He was the promise that there were honest men in Argentina, who could restore the moral health of the nation.

With expectations this high, disappointment was perhaps inevitable. But as an Argentine writer remarked recently in Alfonsín's defence, he can only govern the country he has, not the country we would wish him to have.

The plague of civil politics in Argentina has been the *caudillo*, the demagogue at the head of a party which behaves like a movement, a loose coalition of frequently conflicting interest groups. The leader maintains his power through negotiation within the party, but also by direct appeal to the people over the heads of his party and his government. Alfonsín, in his long years in the wilderness, planned to build a model of Western social democracy in Argentina, to break away from the idea that civilian democracy can only work if there is a leader who carries all before him.

But here comes the paradox. In order to consolidate the system, in order to transform the nation into a modern democracy, Alfonsín now argues, he needs another term and a bigger majority. And in order to do that, he has to rewrite the constitution to enable Alfonsín to stay in power.

The paradox was evident from the beginning. The Argentine electorate chose Alfonsín in far larger numbers than they chose the Radicals. In opinion polls since, Alfonsín's personal popularity consistently scores higher than the government's or the party's. In every crisis of his government, Alfonsín has resorted to a direct appeal for support to the people, most dramatically and, finally, most dubiously, on Easter Sunday following a rebellion by military officers.

It is a measure, and not a very consoling one, of Alfonsín's political skills with the crowd that he emerged triumphant from his Easter Sunday rally. He managed to convince the crowd that they and he together had saved democracy from the military. The truth is rather less straightforward, but does illustrate the degree to which Alfonsín is becoming trapped by the power of his own image.

The fact is that from the beginning, Alfonsín wanted to apply to the armed forces the formula which the government is now struggling to adopt: to make the nation appreciate the enormity of what had taken place in the dirty war, but to limit retribution to the leadership of the armed forces and to a few notorious torturers. The bulk of the participants would be absolved on the principle, rejected at Nuremberg, that they were only obeying orders. Argentina in 1983 was not Germany in 1945. There were no Allied powers with the power to create the state in the image they chose. If Alfonsín had ever seriously considered abolishing the Argentine armed forces and starting again, he had rejected the idea before he came to power in favour of trying to persuade the armed forces to make their own self criticism and forge a new relationship with civil authority. The logic of his position was to amnesty the middle ranking officers at the beginning, but his own public image – that of the man who would bring justice – and the traumatic effect of *Nunca Mas*, the report on the disappeared that Alfonsín himself had commissioned, had raised the expectation of vengeance to such a pitch that an amnesty was politically impossible.

The tragedy is that Alfonsín has fallen off the tightrope, although the crowd has not yet noticed. Far from examining its collective conscience, the Argentine forces have hardened their belief that they acted correctly, even honourably, in the dirty war. In April they tested their power to impose this view on the government and they won. Nerves were so shaken by the events of Easter week that it will probably be possible, though messy, to produce the fix that the government has been quietly promising the armed forces from the beginning, but it is a serious defeat both for the hope that Argentina's military is capable of self-reform and the hope that a civilian government has the authority to impose such a reform upon them. It is also, sadly, the first time that Alfonsín has traded falsely on his image: it was not the enthusiasm of the crowd and the courage of the president which defused the military rebellion. It was a backstage deal which was done even before the presidential helicopter took off for the Campo de Mayo.

Reflex

Alfonsín: Uncle-hero

Alfonsín must govern the country he has. Now he is seeking a government of national consensus, appealing for mass support to create the country he wants. His opposition accuses him of demagoguery while unreconstructed sectors of his own party dream of it – a third great historical movement with Alfonsín at its head. They may be an embarrassment to Alfonsín now, but the question is how far is it possible to sustain Radical power through the charisma of the leader, without the leadership becoming the end in itself. It would be a sad end for a political reformer to become the demagogue in spite of himself. ●

Isabel Hilton

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The Italian T-shirt A reconstructed hammer and sickle design in green, red and black.

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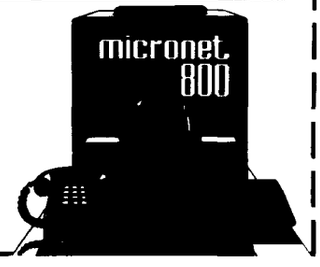

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